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**SPECIAL
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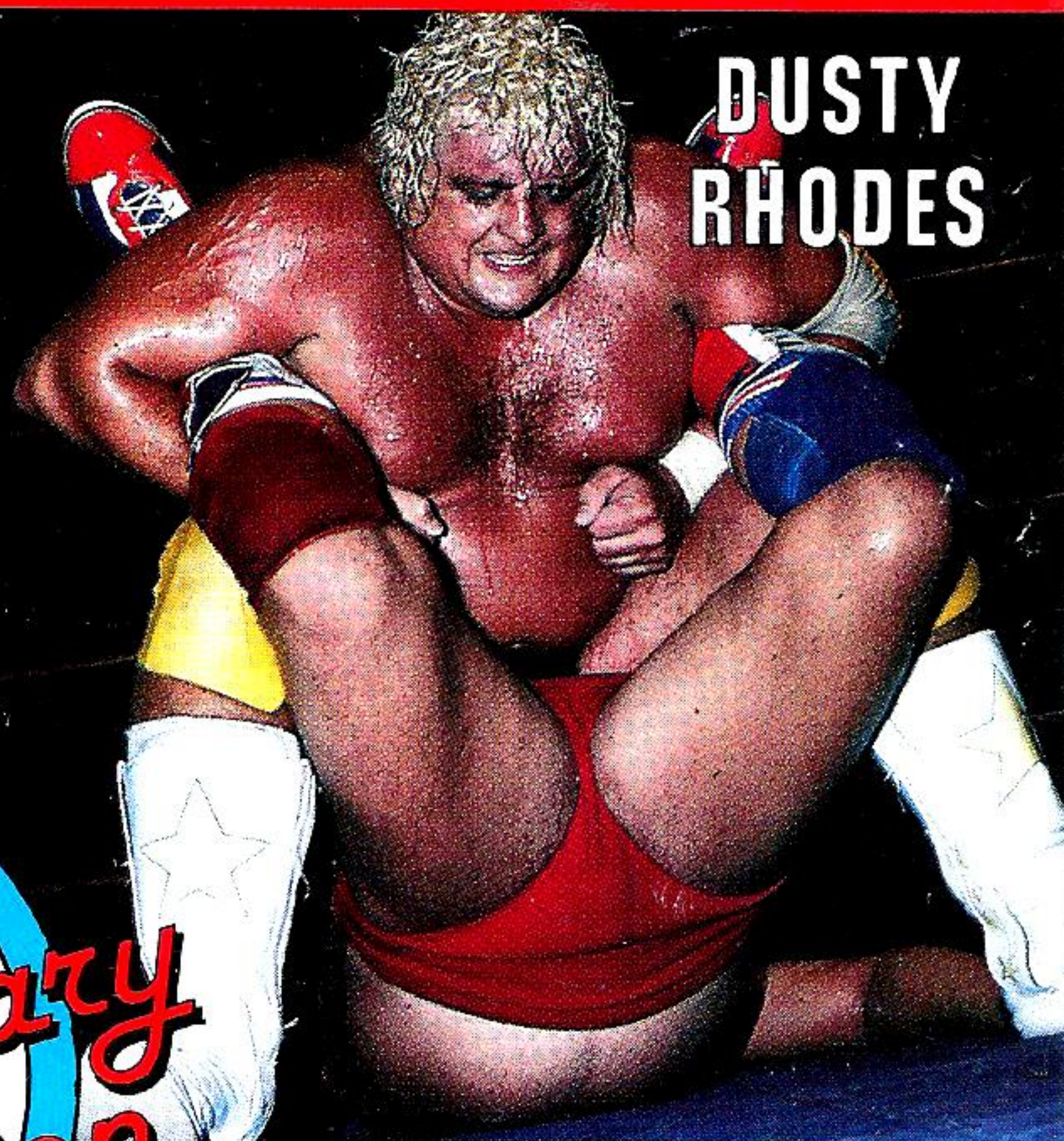
THE **Wrestler**



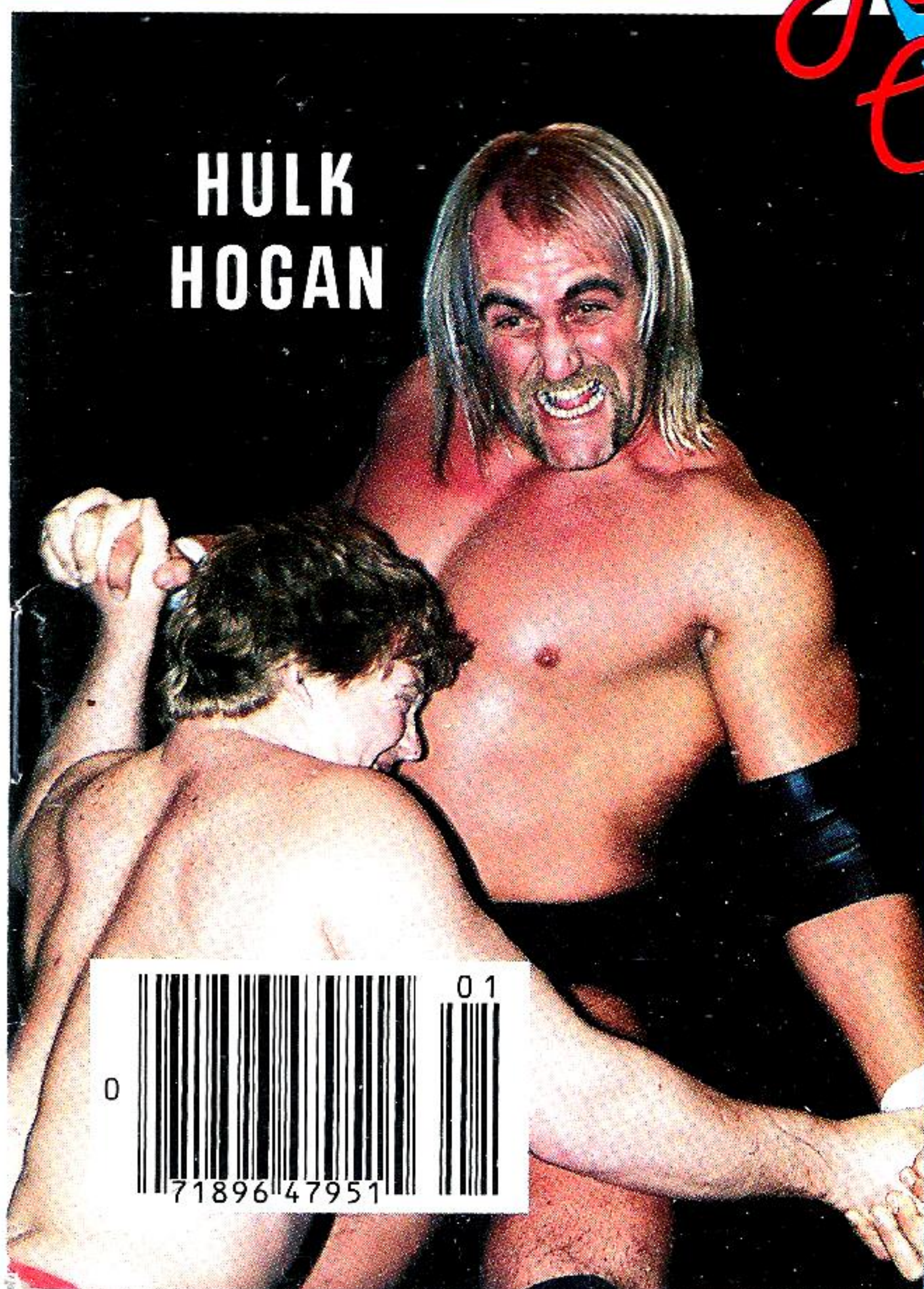
RIC FLAIR

**RESULTS
OF OUR
20th
ANNIVERSARY
POLL:**

20th
*Anniversary
Celebration*

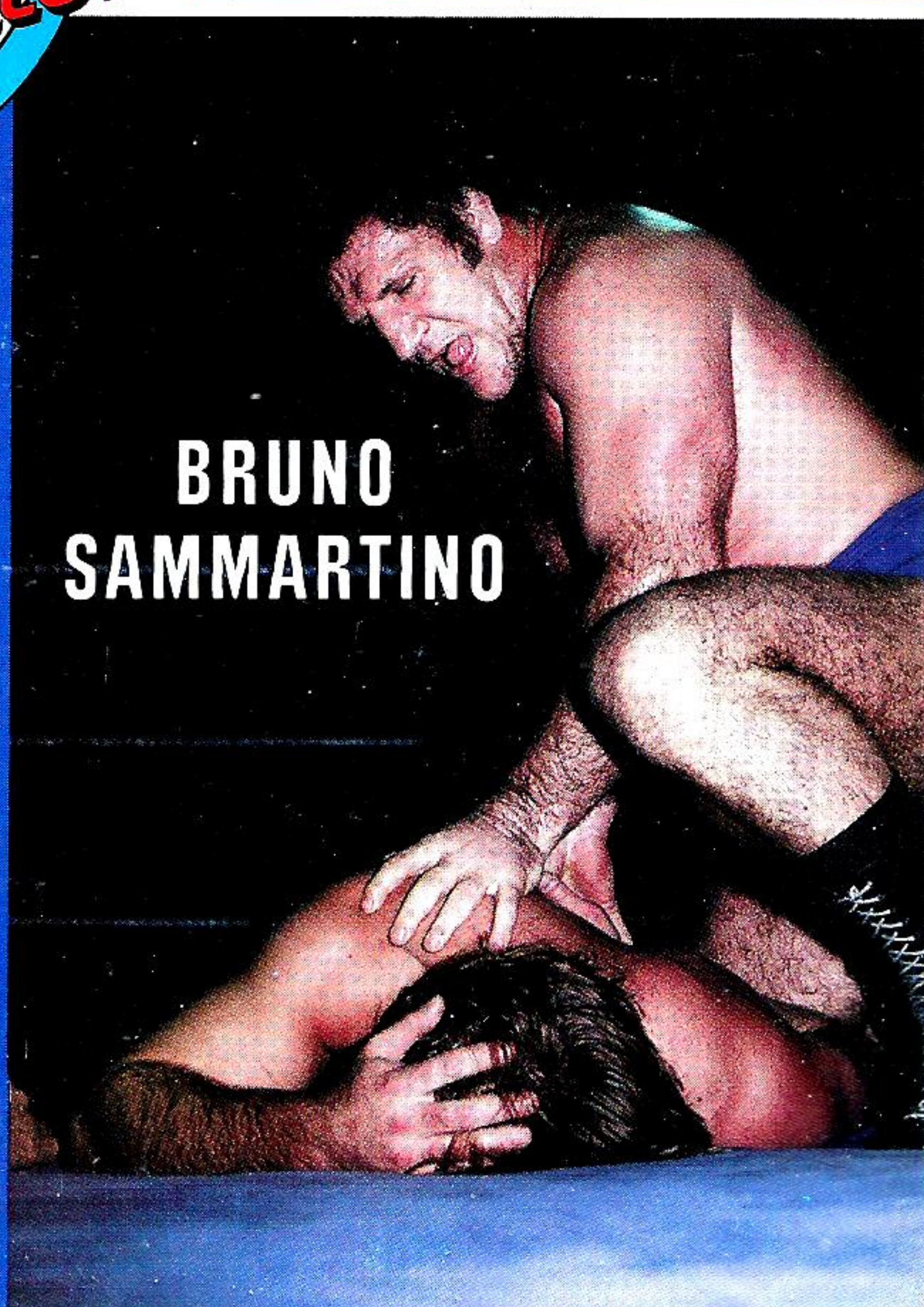


**DUSTY
RHODES**



**HULK
HOGAN**

**THE 10
GREATEST
WRESTLERS
OF
THE
WRESTLER
YEARS**



**BRUNO
SAMMARTINO**



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MORE ROCK 'N' ROLL

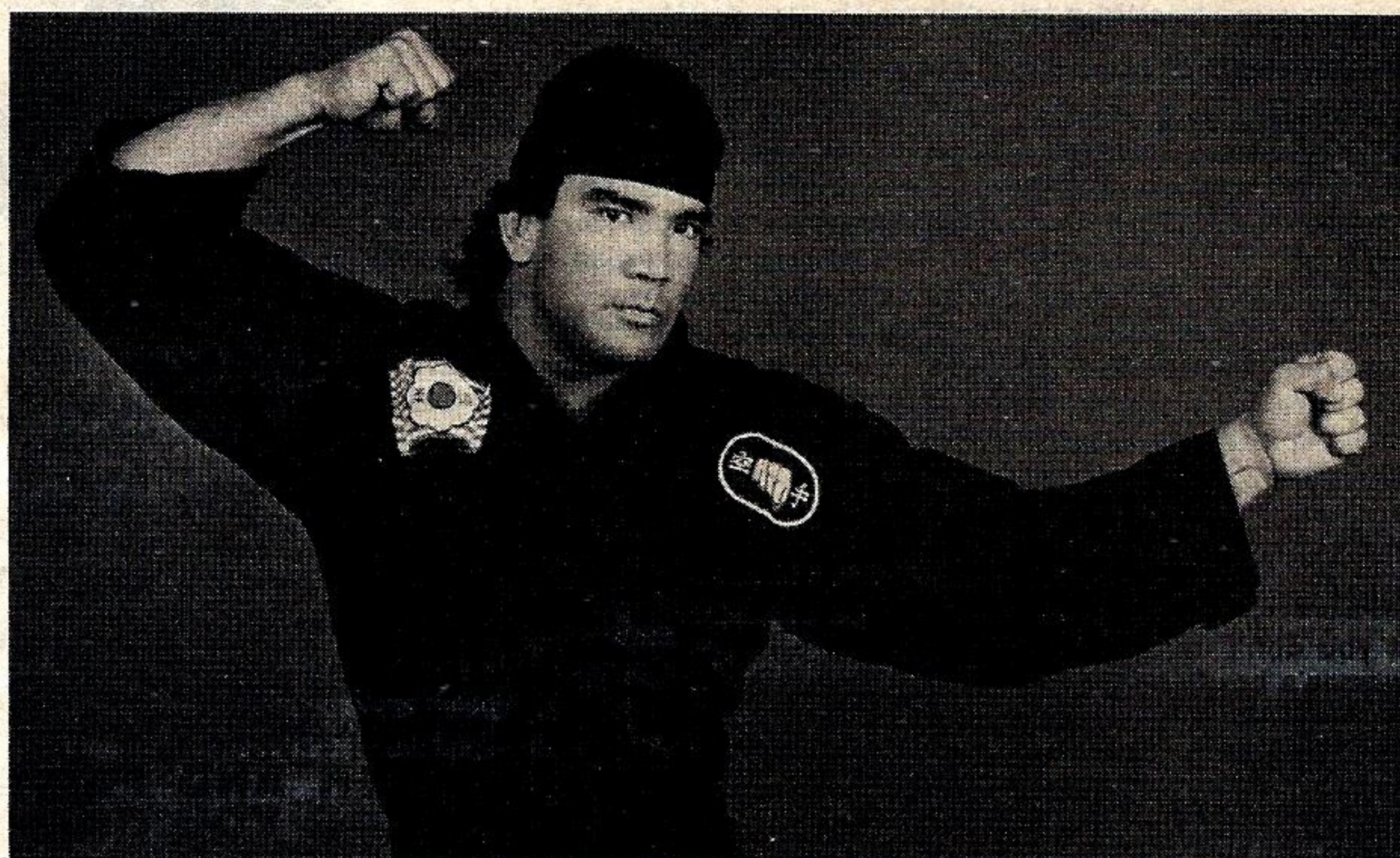
It seems to me that you never feature the Rock 'n' Roll Express in your magazine. I really think you should, considering they are the NWA tag team champions and about the most popular duo in the sport today. Anything you run about them is always so negative. So what if they lost the Mid-South tag team title to Steve Williams and Ted DiBiase? That was a Daffy Duck title anyway. Ricky and Robert deserved to be the World champions and they are. So how about a full-color cover story on them? I don't think that's asking too much. Or maybe you should wait until they defeat the Road Warriors and really rule the tag team world. That will be some story!

MISSY BOB KIMPKINS
Baton Rouge, LA

SAY IT AIN'T SO RICKY

An open letter to Ricky Steamboat:

Rick, the first time I saw you wrestle I knew that you would make a great champion, and the more I listened to you speak the more I liked you. A while back, an interviewer asked you about martial arts. You said that while you were well-versed in most forms of eastern self-defense, the only time you would ever resort to it would be when you were in deep



Rick Steamboat's use of karate during wrestling matches has cost him at least one fan, fellow Hawaiian Craig Wong. Craig remembers Rick saying that he would only use martial arts if it were absolutely necessary.

trouble. I respected you for making such a statement, saying to myself at the time, *Wow! This Steamboat is some guy.*

Now, you are introduced as "The Dragon, Ricky Steamboat" and you are indiscriminate in your use of karate. In fact, in a recent match you kicked your opponent right in the head instead of locking up as you used to do. I guess what all this means is that you lied to me and the rest of the country and you are nothing but a bum. I guess you can't trust anyone these days.

CRAIG WONG
Honolulu

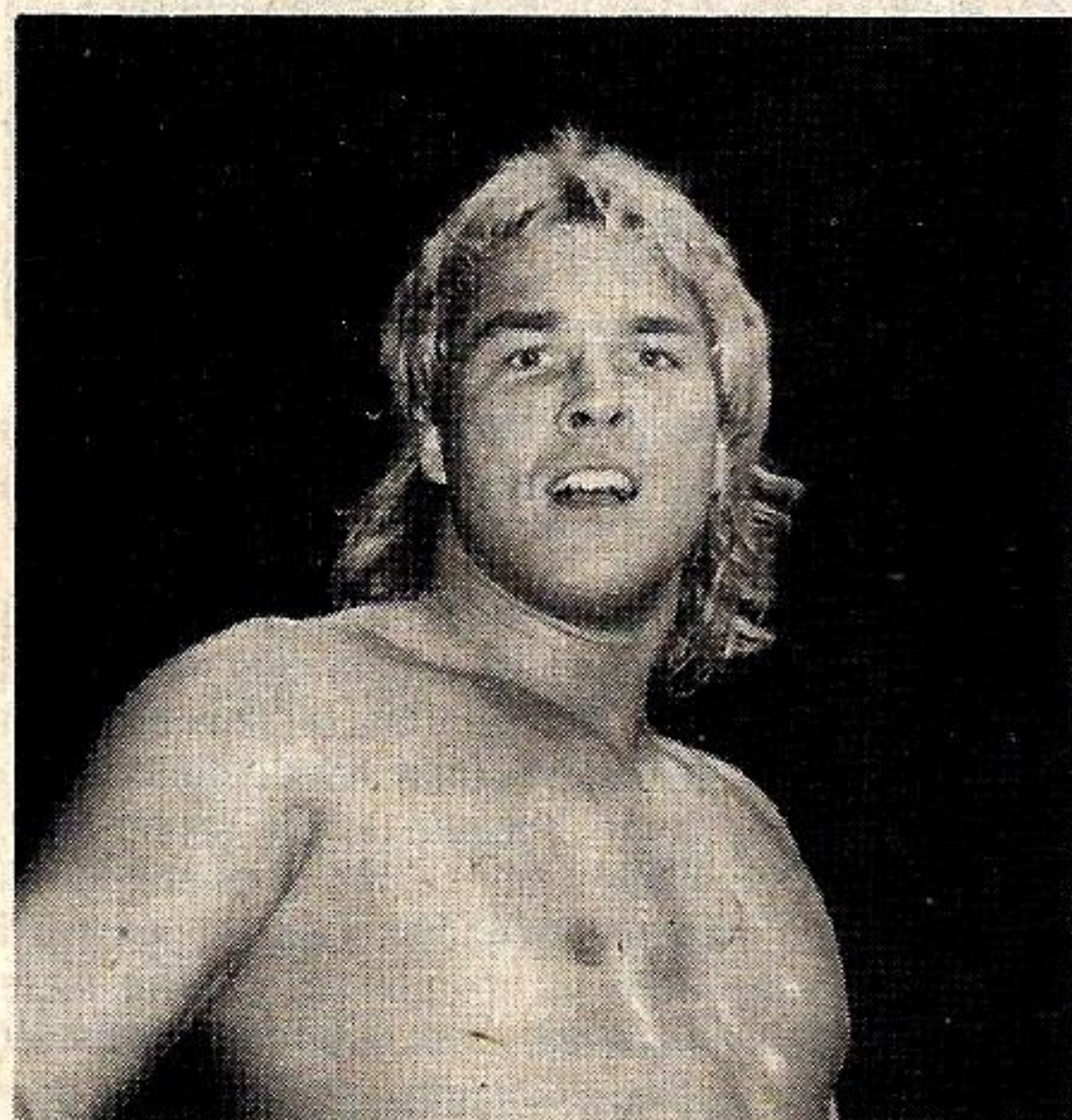
DANGEROUS WWF POLICY

I would like to voice my opinion on what I consider to be a very unfair WWF policy. Hulk Hogan, as WWF champion, is only allowed to defend his title against rulebreakers. Aside from bothering the other scientific wrestlers in the territory, such a policy makes a mockery of the ratings system in the WWF. What's the sense in rating men like Junkyard Dog, Rick Steamboat, and Jimmy Snuka if they will never receive a title shot? Promoter Vince McMahon knows that Hogan's roughhouse tactics might not be so well-received

(Continued on page 62)

WHAT'S HAPPENING!

By BILL APTER



Terry Taylor is the new National champion after a stunning victory over Black Bart in the Omni in Atlanta. Taylor hopes to be as deserving a titleholder as former National champion Ronnie Garvin was.

WE EXTEND OUR congratulations to **Terry Taylor**, who recently captured the National heavyweight title from **Black Bart** in Atlanta.

"That's the reason I came to the World Championship area," Taylor told *The Wrestler*. "I wanted a shot at Bart because I knew I could win the title from him. I worked my way into title contention, got the shot, and now I've got the title."

Taylor's plans for the immediate future?

"I'm just gonna try and bring the same kind of respect and honor to

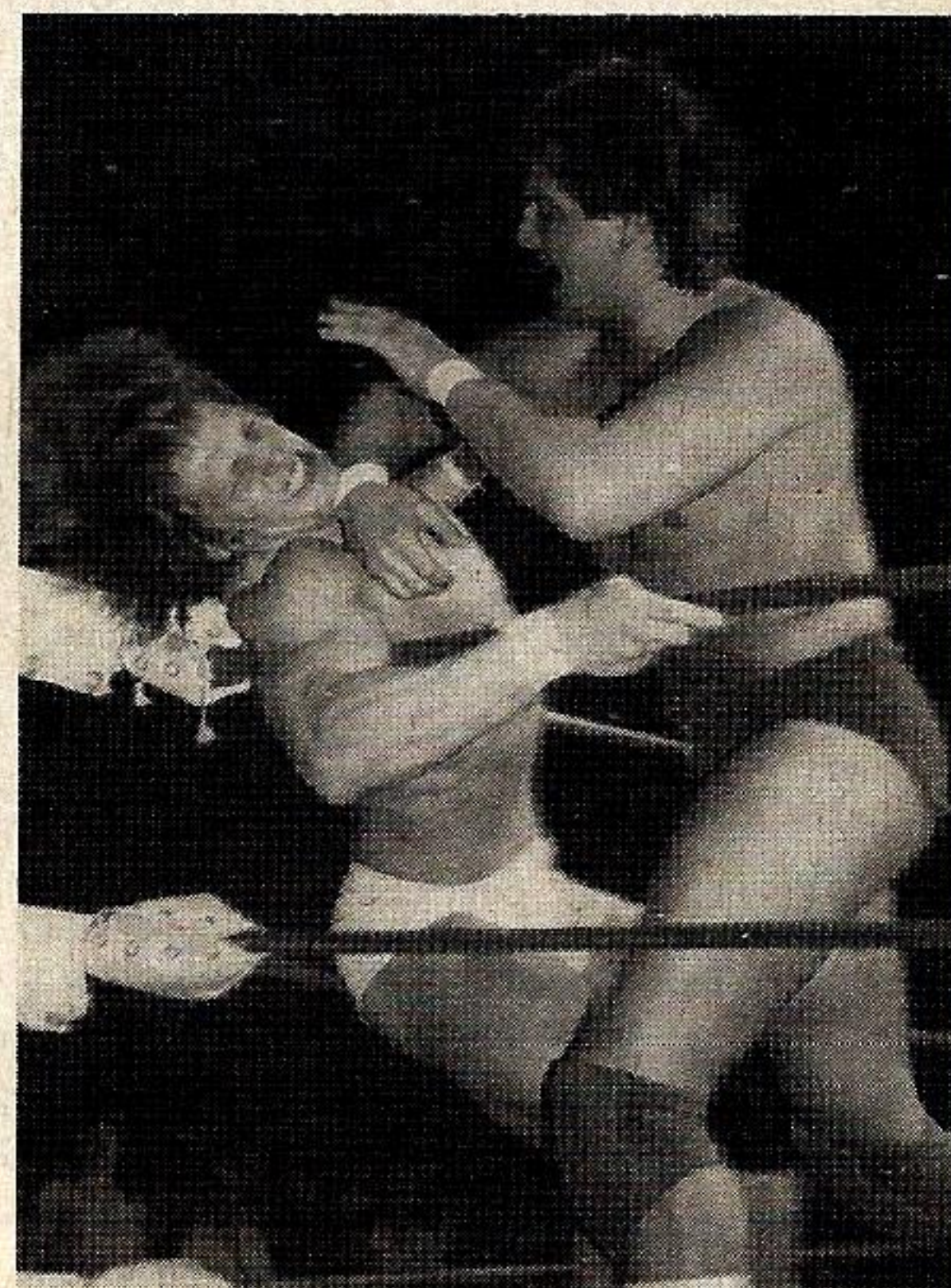
the National title that **Ronnie Garvin** brought to the it some months back. I really respect Ronnie, and I hope I can be as fine a National champion as he was."

What's Bart's reaction to all this?

"What a truckload of crap! That punk Taylor beat me on a fluke! I want a rematch, and I want it to be a *loser leave town* rematch. I got rid of Garvin once, I can get rid of Taylor!"

Bart is currently petitioning for that rematch, but as of press time no date for the contest has been set.

The World Class tag team belts have been held up. During a recent match in the Dallas Sportatorium, champions **Chris Adams** and **Gino Hernandez** went up against **Kerry** and **Kevin Von Erich**. After nearly 15 minutes of heated action, Adams and Hernandez began battling the Von Erichs in double-team efforts and took the match to the outside of the ring. After a few minutes of utter mayhem and confusion, referee **David Manning** called for the bell to end the match. "Chris and Gino, it is obvious to me that you are consciously trying to get yourselves disqualified," Manning told "The Dynamic Duo," "and this is the third time



Chris Adams levels Kevin Von Erich with a forearm smash. The World Class tag team belts that were held by Adams and Gino Hernandez have been declared vacant.

that I've seen this. I'm not standing for it anymore. Therefore, I declare that the World Class tag team championship is vacant, and the title will be held up!" Apparently, the belts will go on the line along with the hair of either Kerry and Kevin or Chris and Gino when the four men meet to battle on October 16 in the Cotton Bowl.

A brand-new tag team in the Pacific Northwest finds **Steve Simpson** and **Joe Savoldi** joining forces as
(Continued on page 50)

CORRESPONDENTS

REPORTS

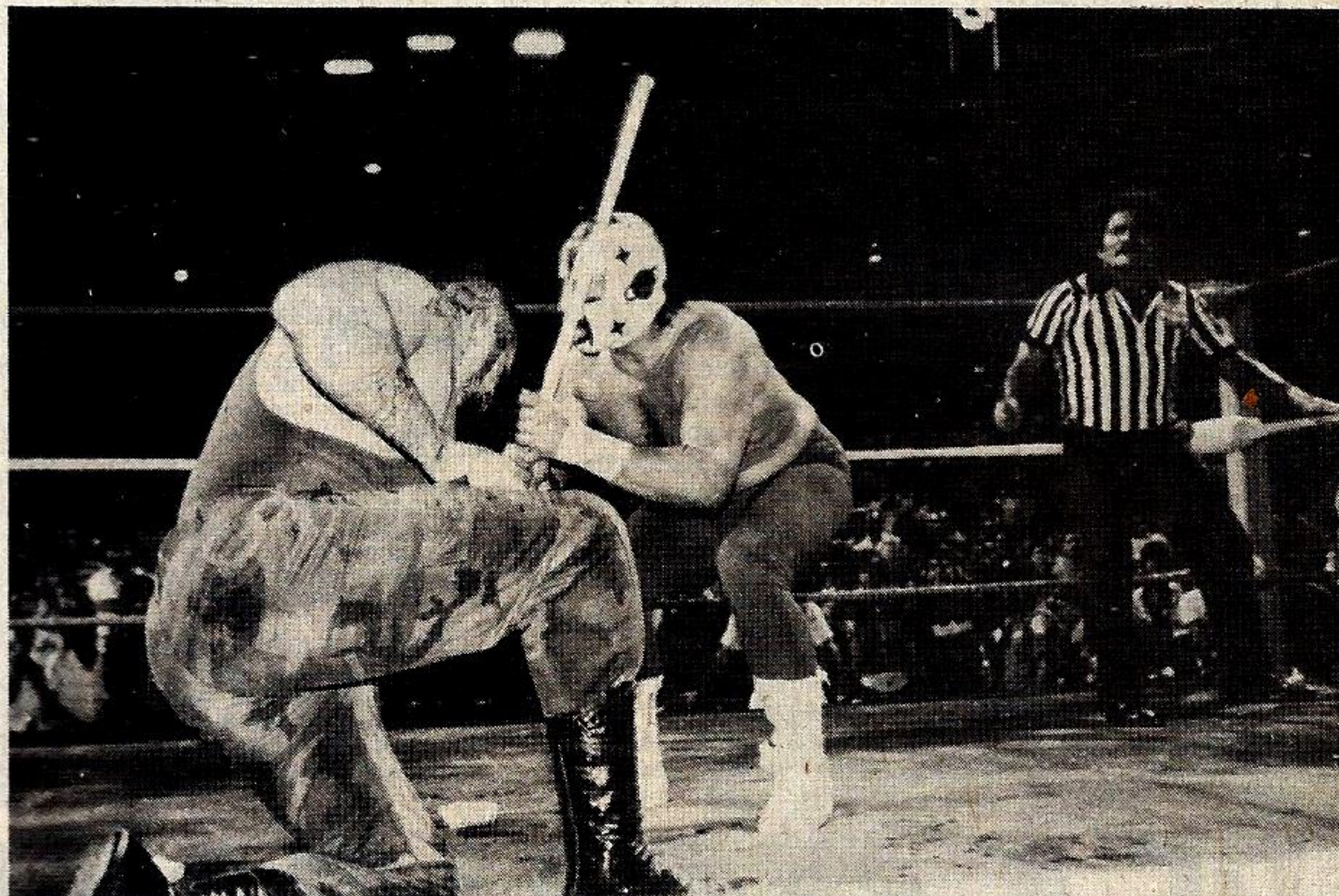
Bayamon, Puerto Rico (Correspondent—Javier Fernandez):

The WWC North American tag team championship was held up when a controversy surrounded the finish of The Masked Invaders-Kiwi Shepherders match, forcing WWC officials to declare the title vacant pending a decisive rematch.

In this match, the title belts were on the top of a 15-foot metal pole. The team getting to the belts first would win them. "Crazy" Luke Williams drove his elbow into the crotch of Invader I to give the Shepherders the early advantage. Invader I struggled over to his corner and tagged off to Invader III, who scampered up the metal pole and retrieved the belts. At that point, the Invaders should have been awarded the title, but there was so much confusion in the ring, the referee did not stop the match.

Invader III threw one of the belts to Invader I, whose attempt to leave the ring was abruptly halted by knee in the groin from Butch Miller. The Shepherders' manager, El Vikingo, distracted the referee's attention long enough for Miller and Williams to gain control of the belts. The referee halted the match and suspended a decision until later.

In other bouts: Carlos Colon defeated Jos LeDuc . . . Austin Idol defeated Hercules Hernandez by



The war in Puerto Rico between The Invaders and The Kiwi Shepherders grows more violent with each passing month. Even after offering the WWC North American tag team championship to the team that could grab the belts from atop a 15-foot pole, there is still confusion regarding the rightful champions.

disqualification . . . The Super Medic defeated Jesse Barr by disqualification . . . Sweet Brown Sugar and Eric Embry were counted out . . . Dan Greer defeated Chicky Starr . . . Ricky Fujuki defeated Tony Colon.

LYNN, MA (Correspondent—Jean Pouliot): Kevin and Kerry Von Erich faced off against World Class tag team champions Chris Adams and Gino Hernandez as The Feud snaked its way to the Northeast.

There was no time for amenities. Kevin slapped Chris's face before the bell. Gino imitated Kerry's strut. He then poked Kerry

between the eyes and tagged off to Chris. Chris put Kerry in a sleeperhold. Kerry powered out of it. Kerry slugged Chris clear out of the ring. Kerry tagged off to Kevin. Kevin exploded all over Chris, smashing him alternately with his fist, his foot, and a ring-side chair. Chris was thrown into the ropes and given a spectacular double-dropkick by Kevin and Kerry. Gino grabbed his belt and hit Kevin over the head. Kevin applied the claw to Gino and Chris at the same time. Chris interfered and the Von Erichs were given the victory.

In other bouts: One Man Gang
(Continued on page 54)

If you would like your area of the country represented in these reports, while also being officially credited with your own by-line, send us reports of the matches you attend. You will have the thrill of seeing your name in an internationally known magazine while at the same time helping to improve the quality of wrestling in your area. So why not give it a try? You will be glad you did!

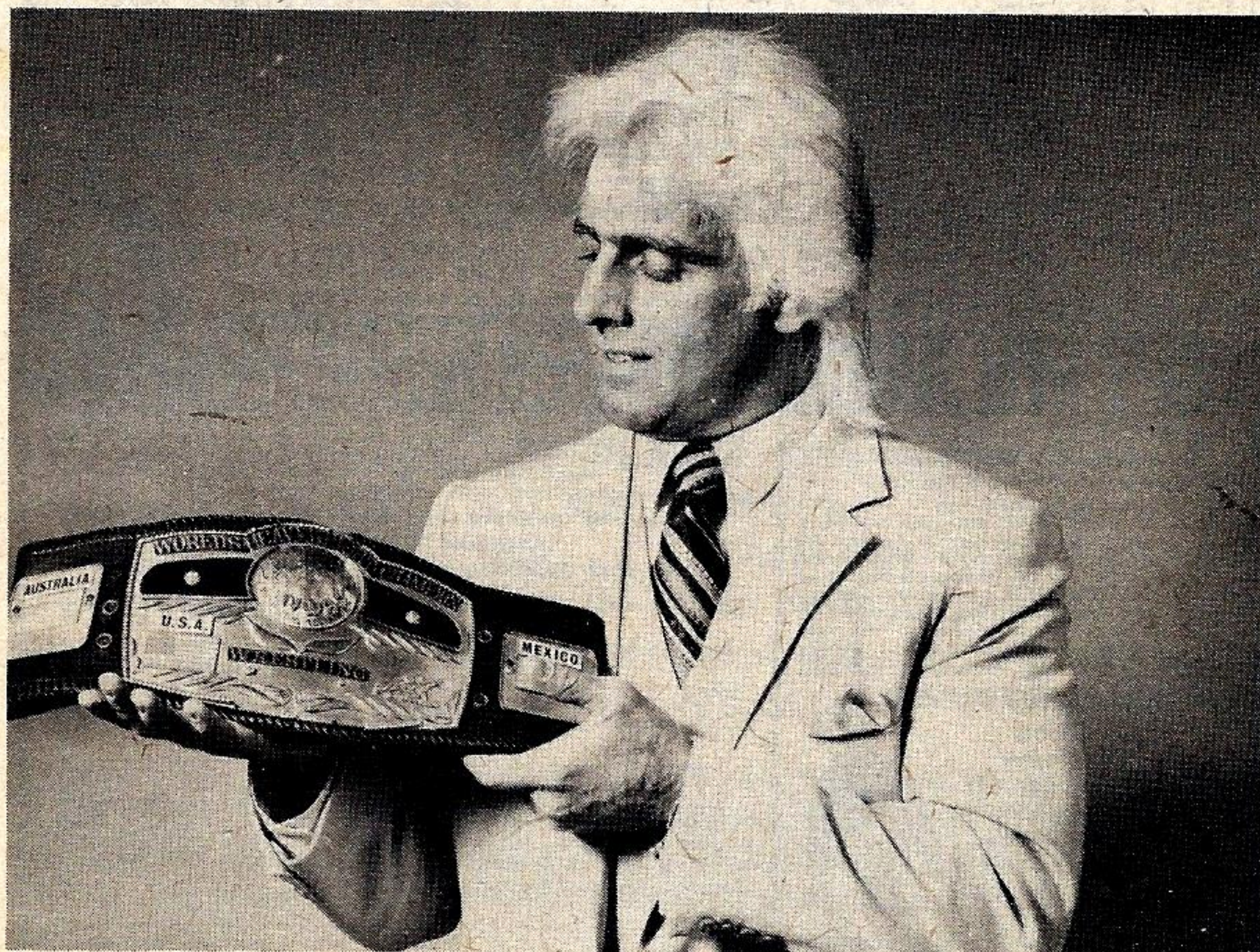
Send your reports to:

CORRESPONDENTS EDITOR, BOX 48, ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NY 11571

Q: "I have a question for The Road Warriors: All these tag teams think they can beat you: the Koloffs, the Andersons, The Shepherders, and the list goes on and on. I don't think there's anyone who can beat you guys. You can take any title or titles you want to take. The only problem is that there aren't any competitors worth defending them against. What do you say?"—Steve Loysdon, Des Moines, IA

A: Road Warrior Hawk replies: "You know something Steve? We don't care! You're right. There *aren't* any teams that can beat us. You're right: We *can* take any titles we want. But the fact is we *enjoy* beating up people. The Russians are the closest thing to real competition we have, and even *they* tremble with fear when me and Animal come to the ring. You're right, we do what we want to do, and beat up who we want to beat up. And right now, we want to keep our AWA World tag belts and beat up anyone stupid enough to come into the ring."

Q: "My question is for Ric Flair: Do you ever plan to wrestle the Incredible Chump Hulk Hogan so that you can prove that there is only



Ric Flair is more concerned with his NWA World title defenses than he is with trying to capitalize on his fame. A Flair-Hulk Hogan match is a virtual impossibility.

YOU ASKED US

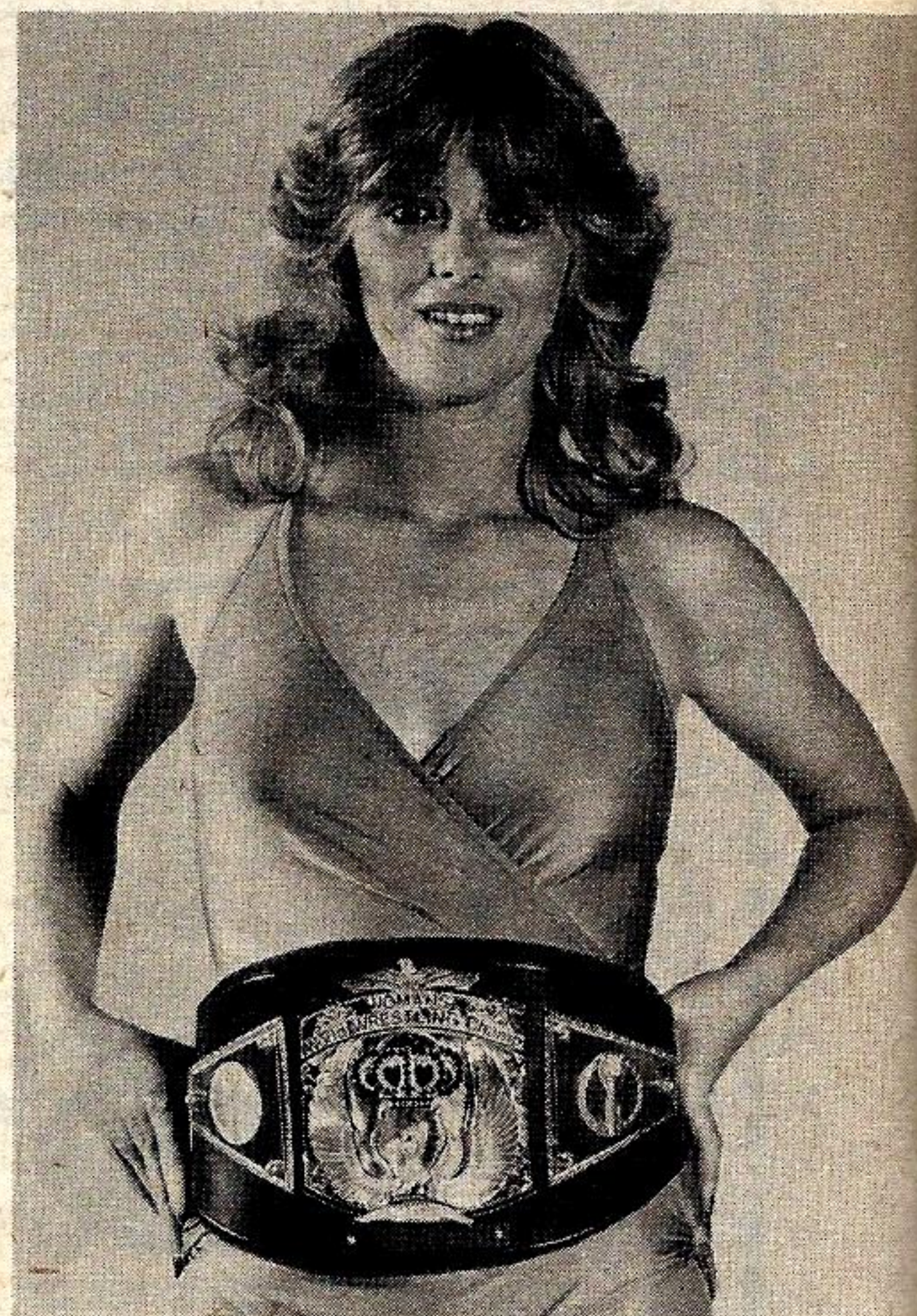
Here's the monthly feature which YOU get to write! It's your chance to have a top wrestler answer YOUR questions! Only the best questions will be answered—so put on your thinking caps and come up with some good ones! Address your questions—and who you would like to have answer them—to: **YOU ASKED US, c/o THE WRESTLER, PO Box 48, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571.** Questions will be answered only in this column and at our discretion.

one world champion, and that's you, slick Ric? One other thing: When is there going to be a Ric Flair wrestling doll?"—Steve Torelli, Swarthmore, PA

A: "I'll tell you something right now, Steve, I don't *have* to prove that I am the one and true world champion," Flair replied, "because I let all

my talking get done in the ring, daddy. I'll pit my skills against Hogan's legdrop any day, but I can't really see the match being made in the near future. However, I can tell you that there are very serious negotiations being made for a match between myself and AWA World champion Rick Martel. We are very close to reaching an agreement, closer than ever before. As for a Ric Flair doll—well, several companies have approached me and I'm weighing offers right now. But frankly, Steve, I'd rather worry about my next title match than spend my time playing around with dolls!"

Q: "My question is for Misty Blue Simmes: In the October 1985 issue of *The Wrestler*, you said that the workingman's ethic is lacking in many of today's wrestlers. What do



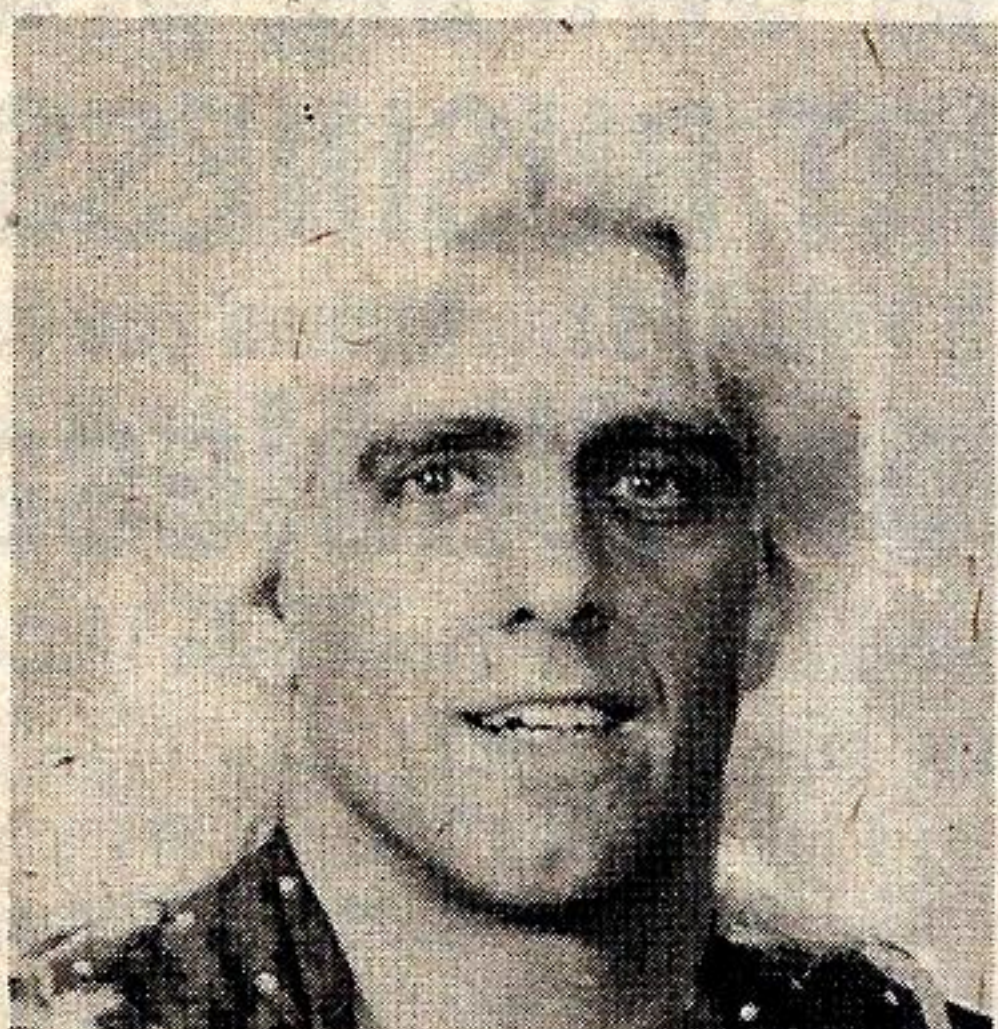
IWF Women's champion Misty Blue Simmes, a proponent of the work ethic, has a great deal of respect for AWA champion Rick Martel.

you think of AWA World champion Rick Martel, who lives by the workingman's ethic?" —Kevin Joyce, Olney, MD

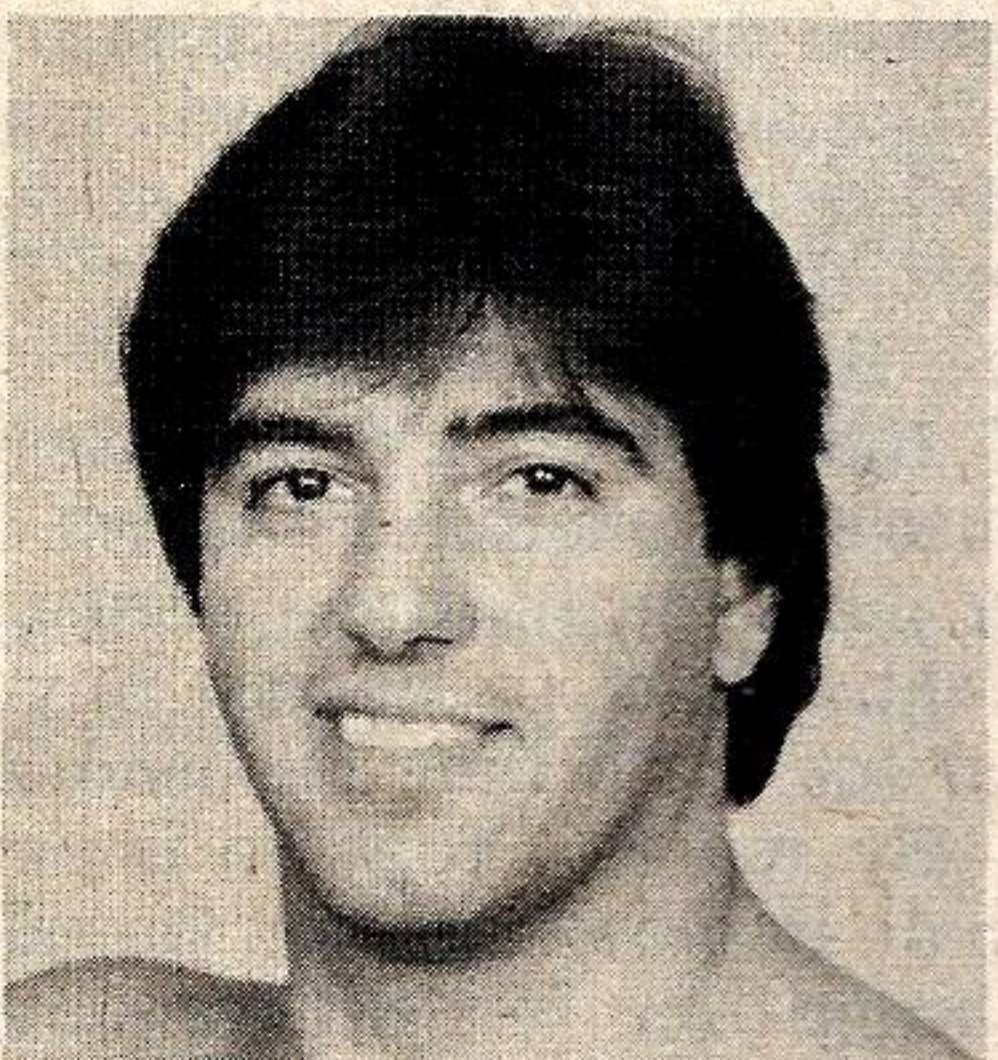
A: "When I made that statement, Kevin, I didn't mean *all* wrestlers
(Continued on page 56)

Thumbs Up

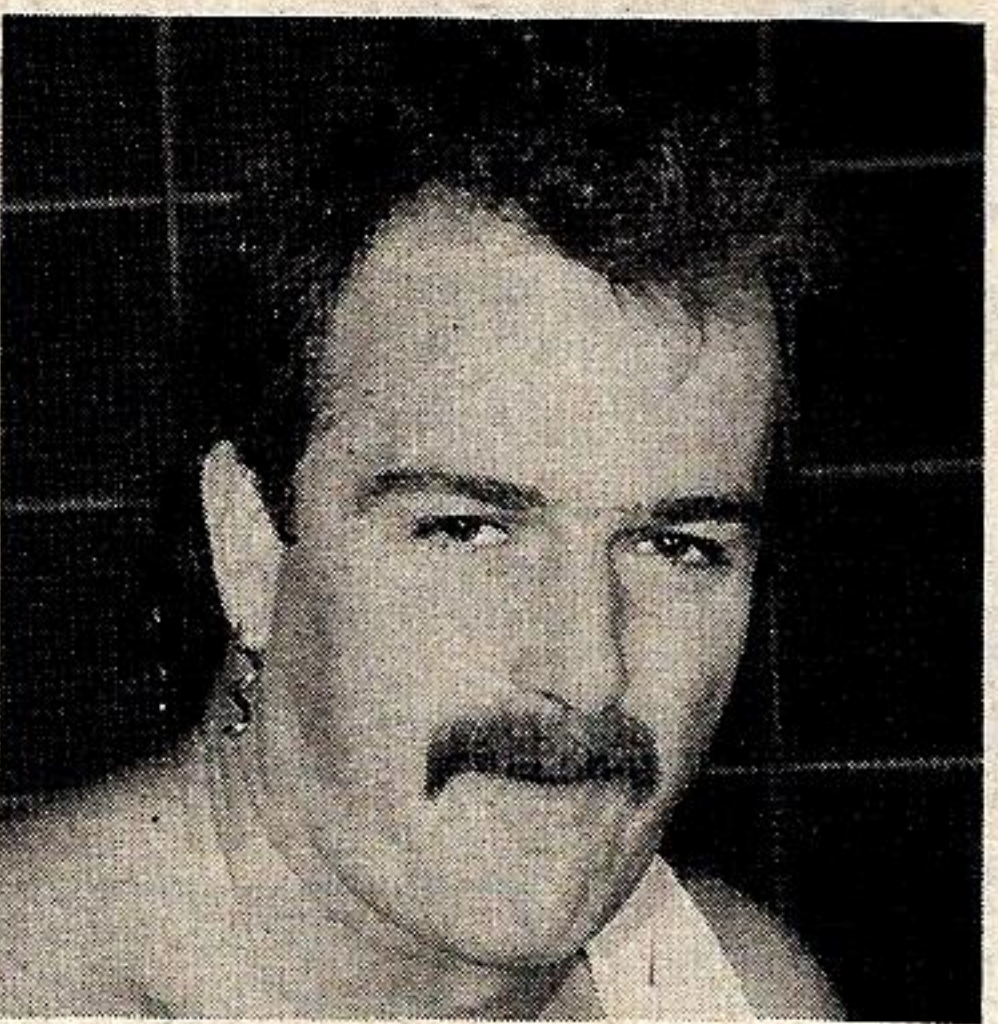
Each issue, *The Wrestler* will praise the noteworthy and damn those who violate the honor of wrestling. The praiseworthy receive a Thumbs Up, the disgraceful are marked with a Thumbs Down. Here is this month's roll of honor and shame.



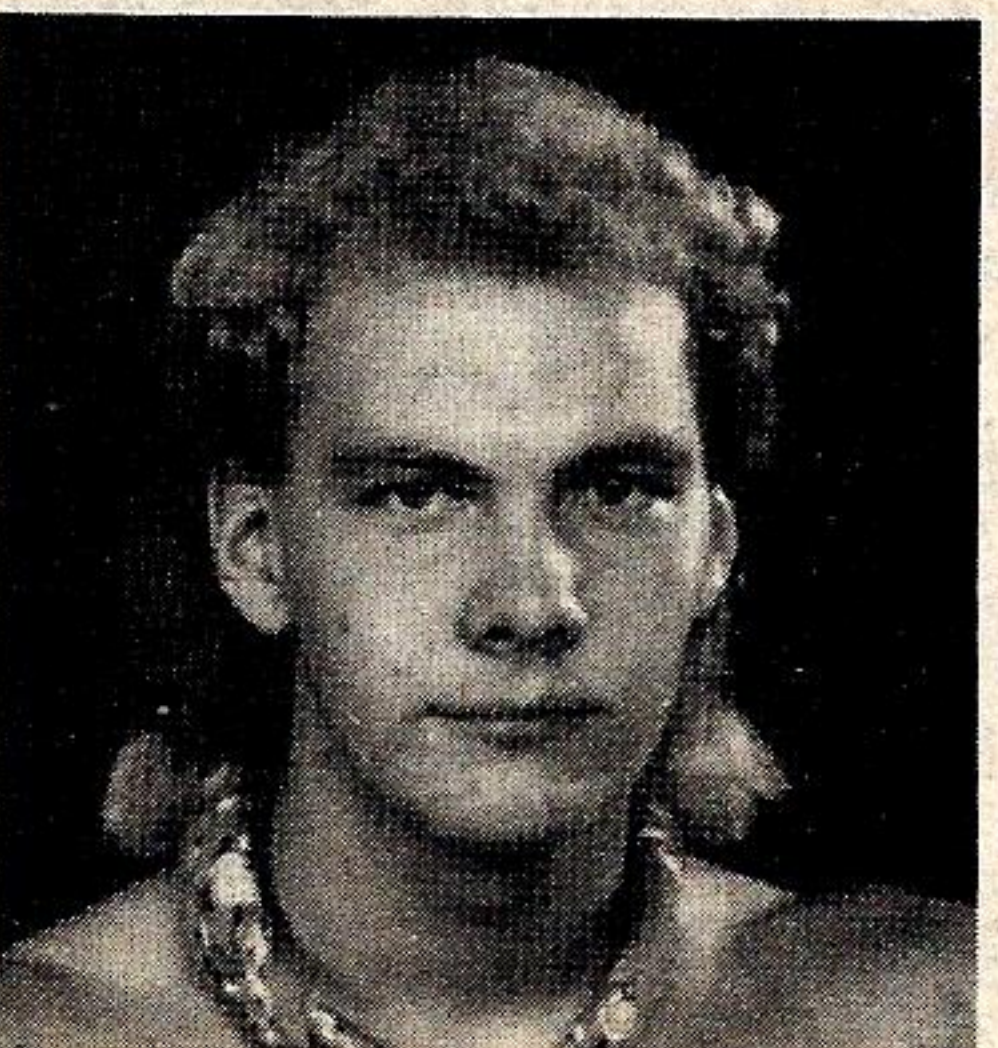
Thumbs Up to Ric Flair: Flair's third title reign has lent fresh new meaning to the time-honored phrase "fighting champion." No past NWA World champion has defended his title against such a mind-boggling variety of wrestlers. Recently, Flair put the 10 pounds of gold up for grabs against Billy Robinson in Chicago, and emerged victorious. Not only did Flair venture into AWA territory, but he chose to grapple a vastly underrated veteran who is still one of the most innovative and dangerous scientific grapplers in the business. Flair has nothing to gain and everything to lose from matches such as these, but he intends to seek out the toughest challenges he can find.



Thumbs Up to Rick Martel: The pride of Quebec City has consistently defended his title against a wide range of contenders, and has never come seriously close to losing the belt by legitimate means. Martel's style and success are so unassuming that few have realized one unique characteristic of his title reign: his matches virtually never end with intentional disqualifications and countouts. The AWA title has also *improved* Martel's ring technique, rather than burning him out. A Flair-Martel match would undoubtedly rank with the greatest matches in history.

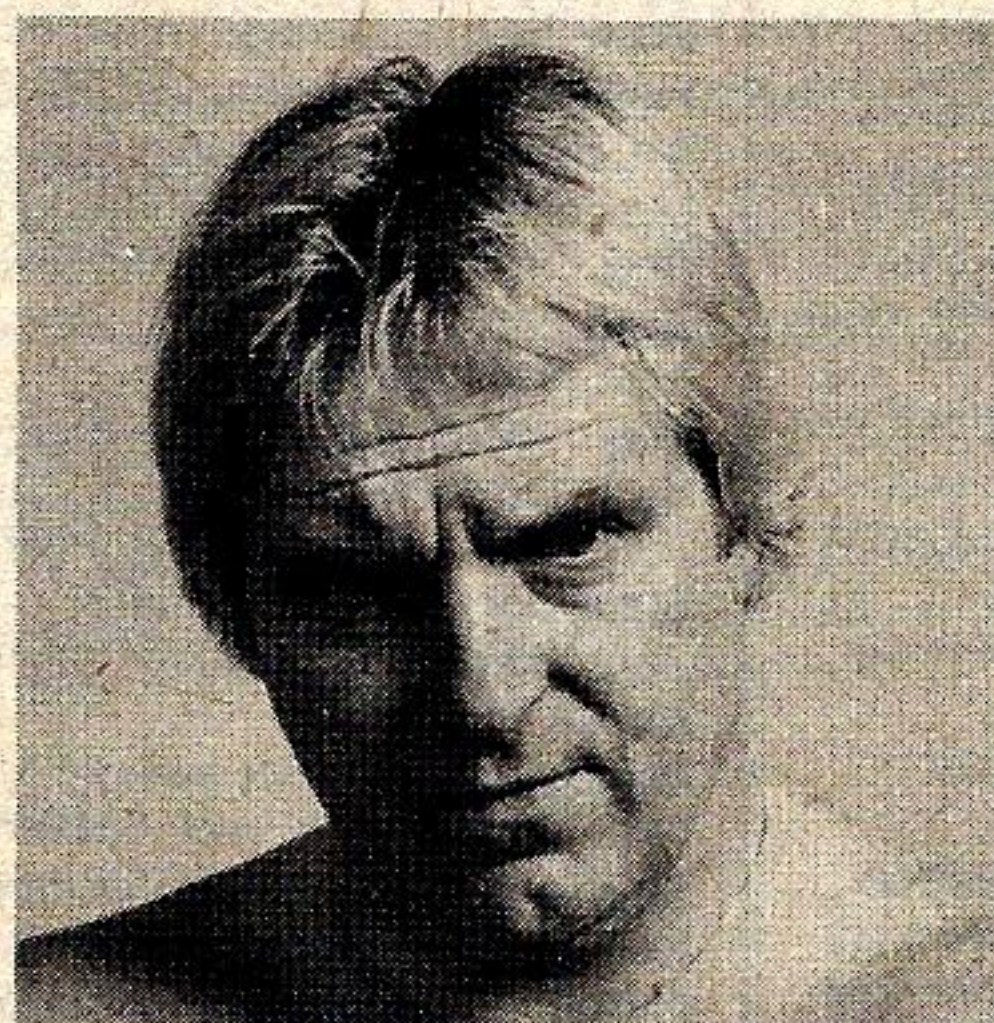


Thumbs Up to Jake Roberts: Mid-South fans who remember "The Snake's" valiant struggles against a rulebreaking Paul Orndorff a few years back may realize that Roberts has always been a rulebreaker with a bum rep. He has always been booed because of guilt by association, whether he was brainwashed by Kevin Sullivan, hypnotically "managed" by Paul Jones and Paul Ellering, or teaming with the Dynamic Duo in the World Class region. Jake is finally getting his life and career in order, re-adopting the valorous traditions of scientific skill and fair play. Thumbs up to Mr. Roberts for resuscitating his true good nature, and sharing it with the fans.

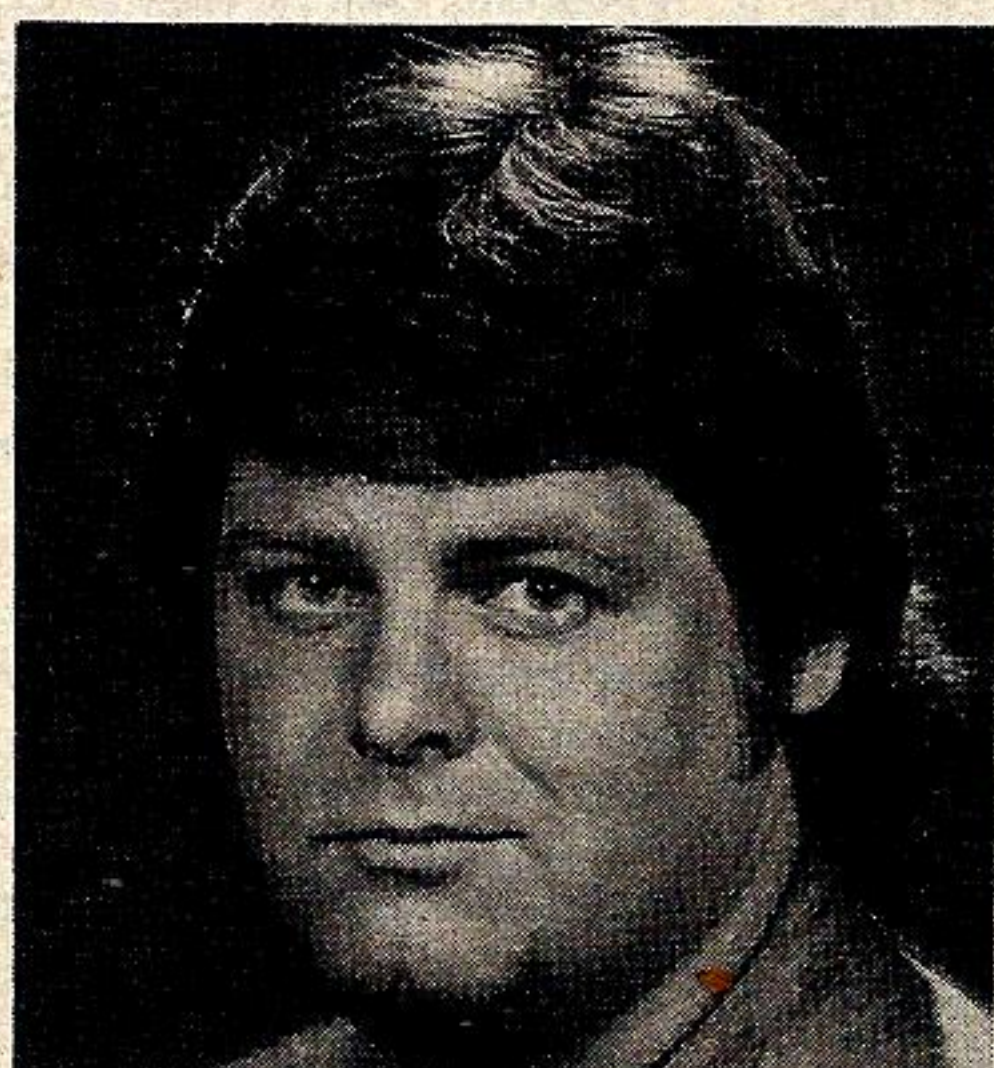


Thumbs Up to Kendell Windham: Like his brother, Barry, Kendell has skyrocketed to stardom. Windham's victory over Jack Hart for the Florida State title was a crucial battle in the bloody war against Percival Pringle's Dynasty, which threatens to destroy wrestling in the Sunshine State. Although Barry and family patriarch Blackjack Mulligan are currently wrapped up in other projects, one could fantasize a reunion, which could conceivably clean up the state of Florida as tidily as the Von Erich family mops up the state of Texas.

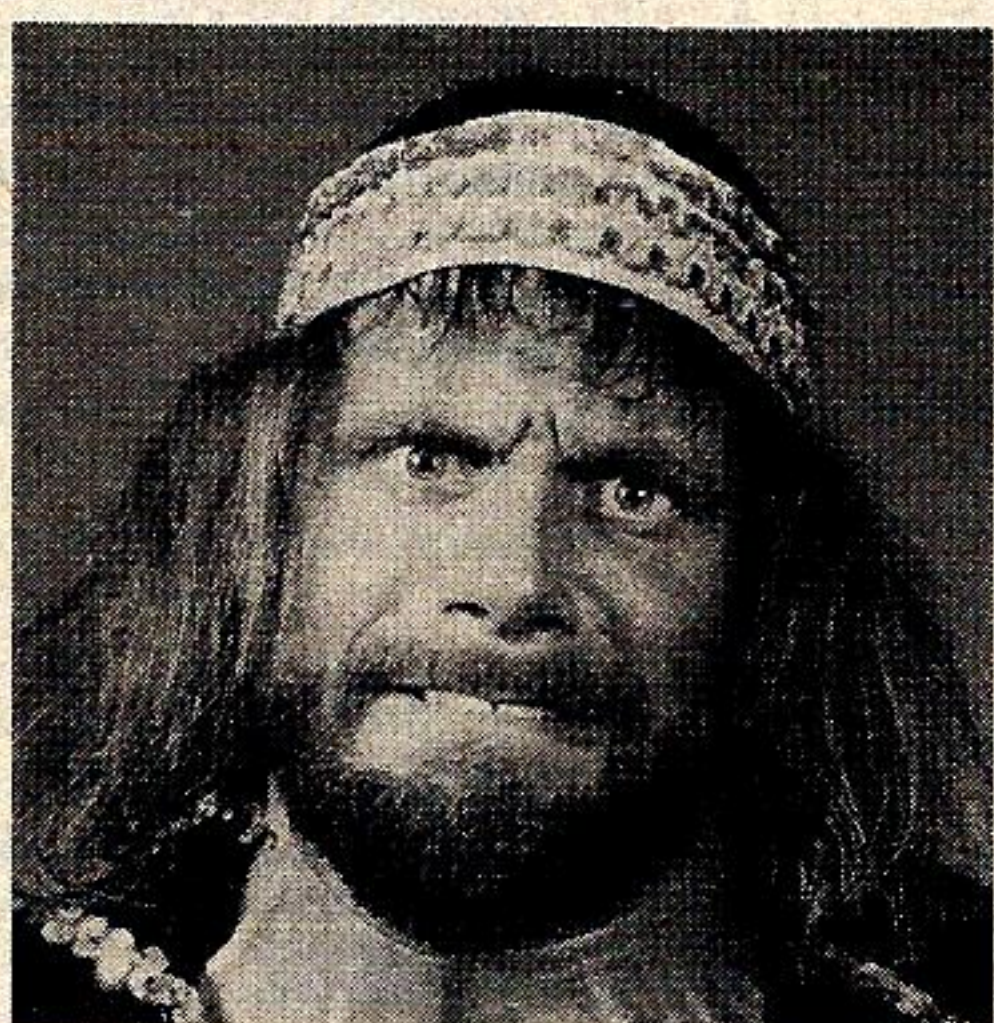
Thumbs Down



Thumbs Down to Bobby Heenan: The Brain disgraced himself in the aftermath of the WWF "Manager of the Year" contest. First, Heenan attempted to pool the votes of all rulebreaking managers in order to win under his name. This is a practice common to presidential nominating conventions, but it has no place in a fan-selected write-in ballot. Secondly, Heenan clobbered winner Lou Albano with his own award. Ironically, Heenan did exactly what Albano himself did to Arnold Skaaland years ago when Skaaland won a similar "Manager of the Year" poll. If the Captain has seen the error of his ways, Heenan should profit by his example.



Thumbs Down to Jerry Lawler: Over the past decade, Lawler has dominated the Mid-Southern region, distinguishing himself as the "King of Wrestling" in that part of the country. The King, however, is prone to exercise his influence with the paranoiac fervor of a tyrant. As part of a tag team with Phil Hickerson, Lawler demands \$5,000 cash up front from his partner as a sort of insurance policy against betrayal. True, they have had differences in the past, but we feel that Jerry is taking advantage of Hickerson. Tag teams should be founded upon a base of mutual trust, or not at all.



Thumbs Down to Randy Savage: Last month, we applauded Savage's decision to reject the big bucks of the rulebreaking managers in the WWF and hire an unknown. In retrospect, we realize Savage's "independence" in this case amounts to sexist egotism. The Macho Man treats his stunningly beautiful manager, Miss Elizabeth, like dirt. Her role is not only less than a manager's, but less than a valet's: Baby Doll or Precious would never accept the random abuse Savage heaps upon her. We only hope Savage's demands of subservience won't lead to physical cruelty.



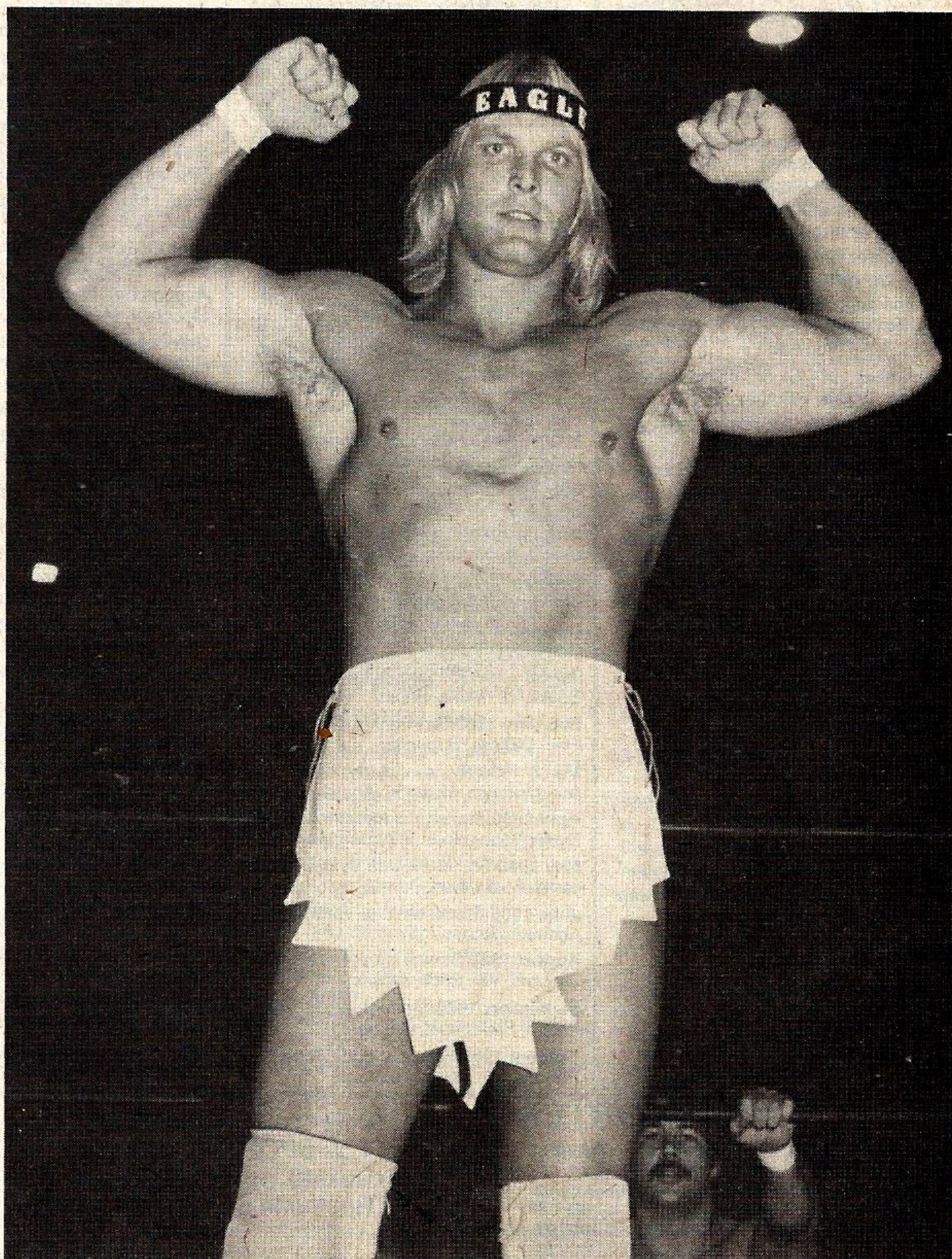
Thumbs Down to Exotic Adrian Street: We at *The Wrestler* feel that the talented Mr. Street's "outrageous" manner of dress and personal philosophies are no more shocking than, say, any number of pop stars from Little Richard to Boy George. However, we must draw the proverbial line when a champion takes the Southeastern title belt he won from Austin Idol and spray-paints it pink. This is akin to spraying graffiti on Teddy Roosevelt's nose at Mt. Rushmore. Street doesn't realize that any championship belt is the property of *wrestling*, not of any individual. We shudder to think of what he would do with the NWA's 10 pounds of gold if he won that! □

INTRODUCING STARSHIP EAGLE

AS HE GREW up, and up, and up, Starship Eagle realized that his career possibilities were being narrowed with each gaining inch. He had barely turned 10 when his childhood dream of jockeying home a winner in the Kentucky Derby was dashed by an unexpected growth spurt. Motocross and diving were eliminated by age 12, and pole vaulting, an early adolescent obsession, died hard at 16.

By then it didn't matter anymore, because Eagle had stuffed his 6'6" frame with 235 pounds of stoned muscle and had several dozen college football coaches stampeding his front door with letters of intent. He chose Georgia, before Herschel Walker chose it, and before the University had been promoted to the pantheon of college athletics. Although Starship Eagle labored in relative obscurity in Athens, he acquitted himself skillfully enough to be selected by the New York Jets in the NFL draft. A leg injury forced him from the gridiron after only a year, but by then he had made the acquaintance of the man whose scouting skills are superceded only by his wrestling skills.

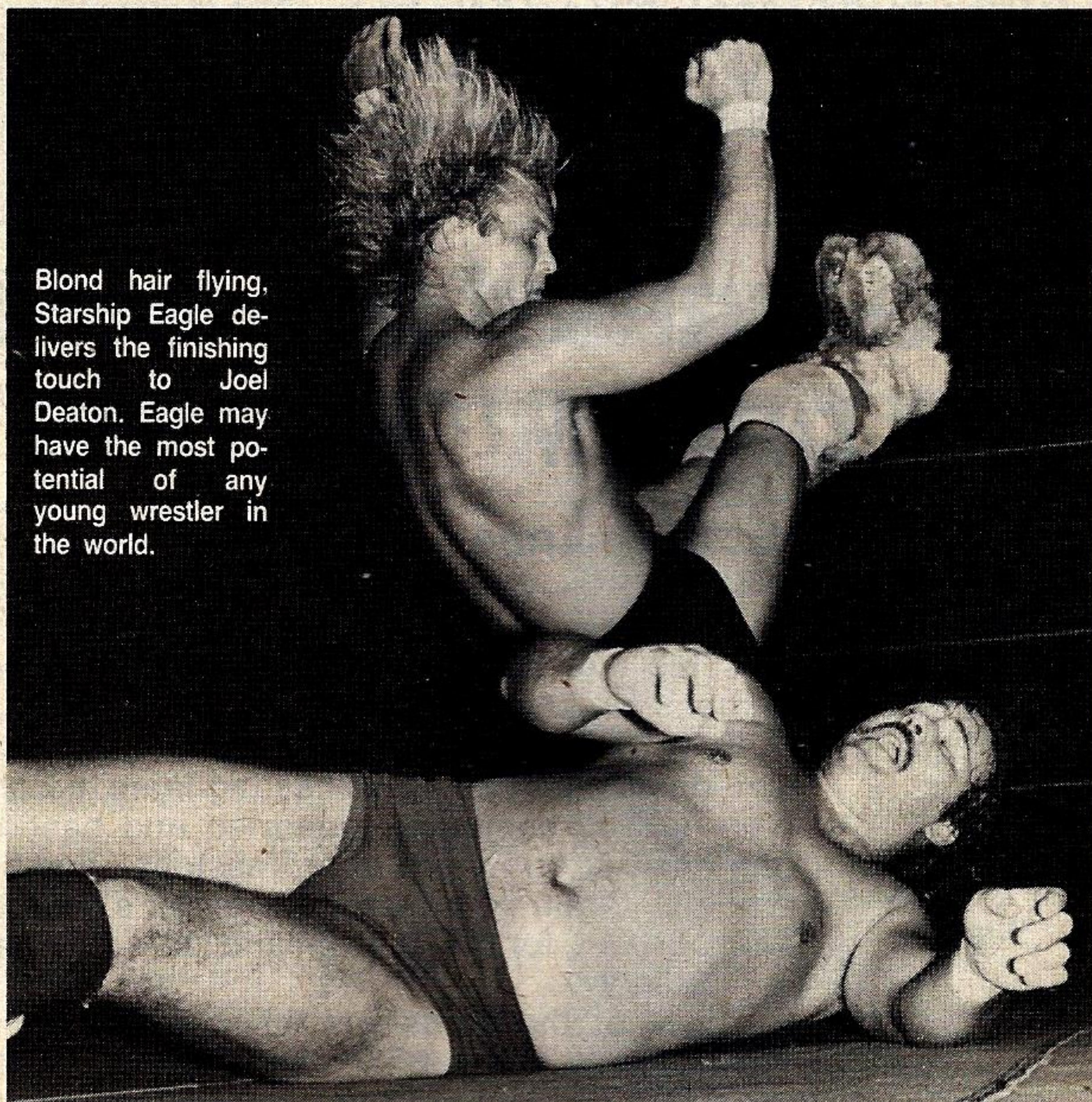
In his storied career, Dusty Rhodes has discovered many men whom he's taken from varied walks of life and
(Continued on page 20)



Starship Eagle stands 6'8" and weighs close to 300 well-muscled pounds. According to some experts, he also possesses the charisma and has the potential of another blond muscleman named Hulk Hogan. Is this the beginning of "Eaglemania," and, if it is, how high will this young star fly?

INTRODUCING

(Continued from page 18)



Blond hair flying, Starship Eagle delivers the finishing touch to Joel Deaton. Eagle may have the most potential of any young wrestler in the world.

transformed them into successful professional wrestlers. As Rhodes likes to say, "I got the eye for a good man. I got antennae, just like a bumblebee. I can smell honey from a thousand yards. This Eagle might just be my greatest find yet, daddy."

Rhodes, who was instrumental in starting the careers of Barry Windham and Sam Houston, met with Eagle several times while he was recovering from his leg injury in Tampa and they decided that at 6'8" and 285 pounds, professional wrestling was likely the most appropriate and rewarding field of endeavor that the Starship Eagle could undertake. Dusty remembers saying to Eagle at the time, "A boy with your size and your look is a natural for this here particular sport. In no time at all you'll have the ladies on your tail and your pockets stuffed green with money."

Rhodes quickly points out that the canvas he painted for Eagle was not one of only bright lights and fetching headlines. "Hell, no daddy!" Rhodes

said. "We had ourselves some lunch at this fine restaurant I know out on the bay in Tampa. I pulled up in my Mercedes-Benz and walked to our table in my \$1,000 suit. I shook Eagle's hand and on my finger sat a five-carat diamond ring. I was hoping that this demonstration would make an impression on Eagle and it did."

"He said something about how he admired my ring and that with his first week's paycheck he might just go out and get one just like it. I said to him fine, I wish him the best of luck. Then I took off my sunglasses and showed Eagle the scars on my face. Then I ripped off my shirt and made him look at the roadmap of cuts that my body is."

"I told him stories about having my face raked across barbed wire, about wrestling with cracked ribs, broken fingers, sprained ankles, and being knocked unconscious and left for dead. I told him about being on the road for three, four months at a time without a day off and eating grease

and drinking mud in hotel rooms whose walls after a while begin to get smaller and smaller.

"I told him that if you're not willing to work your tail off you could get killed in this sport. It's not like football, where if you make a mistake there are 10 other guys who can cover your butt. Uh-uh. In the ring it's either you or the other guy, and you had better be prepared."

Dusty's talk with Eagle had its desired effect. The Starship took his act into the gym and never looked back. Together with his friend, Coyote, who he had known from his weight training days in Georgia, Starship ran his training schedule into the ground. Known in the gym as the "Zealot" for his fierce and sober approach to practice, Eagle practically forced the Tampa promoters to move up the date of his debut match.

In their debut match, Eagle and Coyote, The American Starship, defeated the team of Bulldog Brown and Marty Jannetty, and started a tour of the United States that saw them pile victory upon victory. After several successful months as a team, Coyote and Eagle decided to split up, Coyote going into the AWA while Eagle moved to the Mid-Atlantic. Their parting was completely friendly.

"I wanted to do something on my own," explained Starship about the breakup. "Coyote and I had our run and I'm sure we'll team again some other time. But right now I want singles action. I want Ric Flair. I know people think that I'm rushing it, but he doesn't scare me. No one scares me, thanks to Dusty Rhodes. He's given me the inspiration to go out and attempt anything I want. As long as I try my hardest, I can never fail."

Starship Eagle, who, because of his dimensions, many critics are comparing to Hulk Hogan, has so far been immune to those detractors pointing out his limited experience in the ring. With his body and attitude, perhaps Ric Flair should take some time from his hectic schedule and pay attention to this Floridian who is after more than just the perfect tan. □

Q&A

Each month, *The Wrestler* will present a "Question and Answer" forum with an important figure in the wrestling world. It is your chance to meet wrestling's biggest stars as they answer the questions uppermost in the fans' minds



Although Mike Von Erich is not using any of his strength as he clamps mock headlocks on his older brothers, Kerry and Kevin, he needed all his strength to survive a nearly fatal illness.

Q: Kerry, before we get into wrestling, I know there's an entire country out there anxious to know how Mike is doing.

A: Yeah, Bill, we sure do appreciate all the phone calls and letters and concern that the fans have shown. Mike seems to be recovering pretty nicely. Lots of people who get toxic shock syndrome don't do as well. Fortunately, Mike was in excellent shape and was able to battle back. He had us all scared to heck for a while.

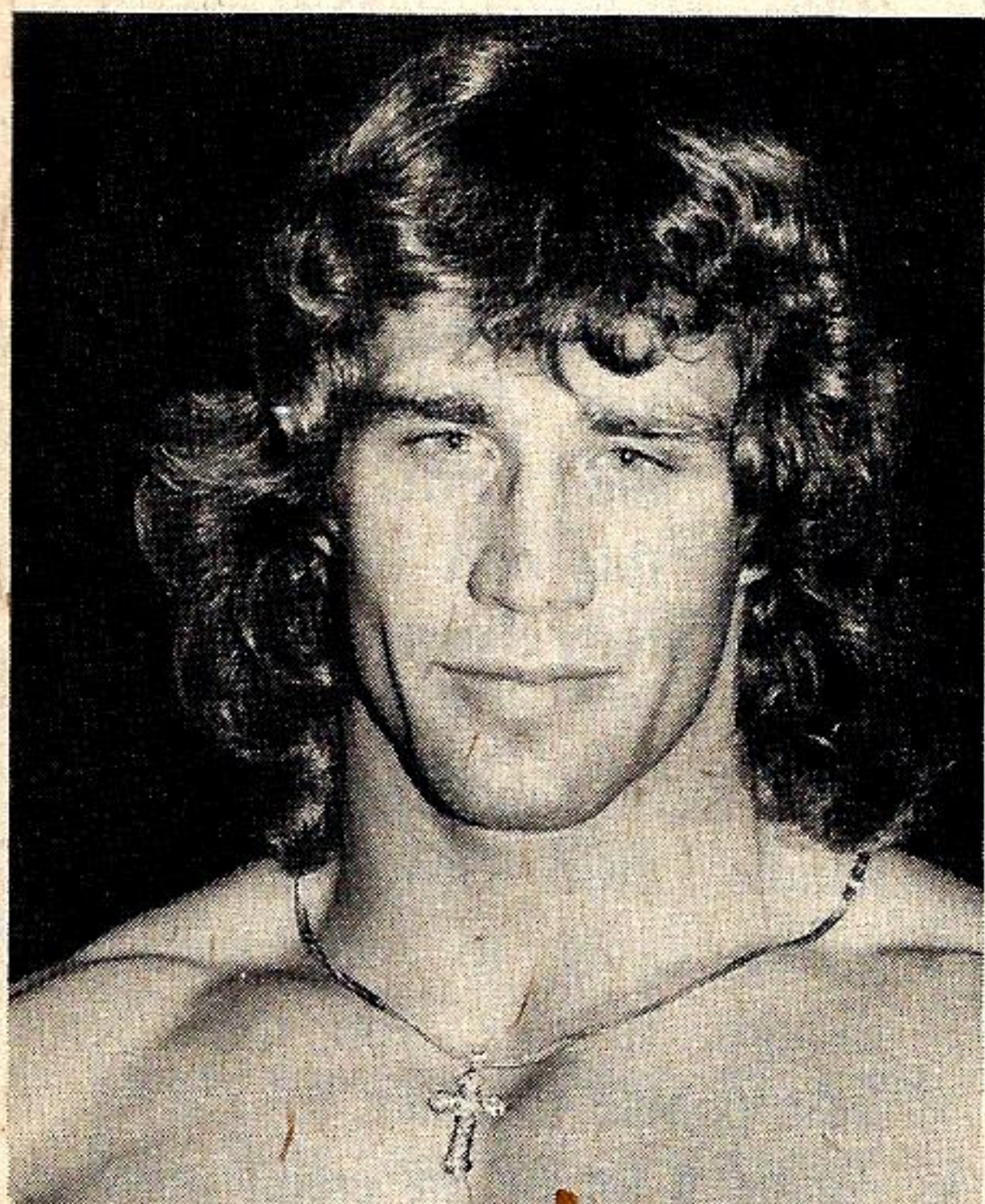
Q: Will he be able to wrestle again?

A: The doctors are looking for a 100 percent recovery, although it's kind of early to tell what kind of shape Mike'll be in when it's all over. We're just happy he's alive. Knowing Mike, you can bet that if there's a way to get back in that ring, he'll find it.

Q: Well, we here at the magazine and fans everywhere in the world wish him the best.

A: Thank you, Bill. And again thanks to all you fans out there who've supported Mike through this time and supported us over the years. I know sometimes it appears that wrestlers are impersonal, but I want you to know that if it were possible, I would thank each and every one of you personally.

Q: Now, Kerry, what about yourself? Currently, you're part of a six-man tag team championship team, but



KERRY VON ERICH

AS 1985 WINDS down, Kerry Von Erich will be one of the first to bid it a fond farewell. It was not a banner year for the "Modern Day Warrior," especially in light of 1984, the year Von Erich briefly possessed the NWA title. There were no major championships in 1985, and the one singles title he did manage to win, the American title in November 1984, he lost to his despised foe Chris Adams in February '85. Additionally, '85 saw Kerry's younger brother, Mike, stricken with a near fatal disease, from which, we are relieved to report, he is quickly recovering. A mediocre year for Kerry Von Erich, however, would be a banner season for most everyone else. Von Erich is part of the World Class six-man tag team championship team with his brother Kevin and Brian Adidas. And although the title shots have come less often this year, he's also run successful campaigns against One Man Gang, Gino Hernandez, and Mark Lewin. Kerry spoke with Senior Editor Bill Apter about this year and the years to follow.

all things considered, 1985 hasn't been very good to you. What about the future?

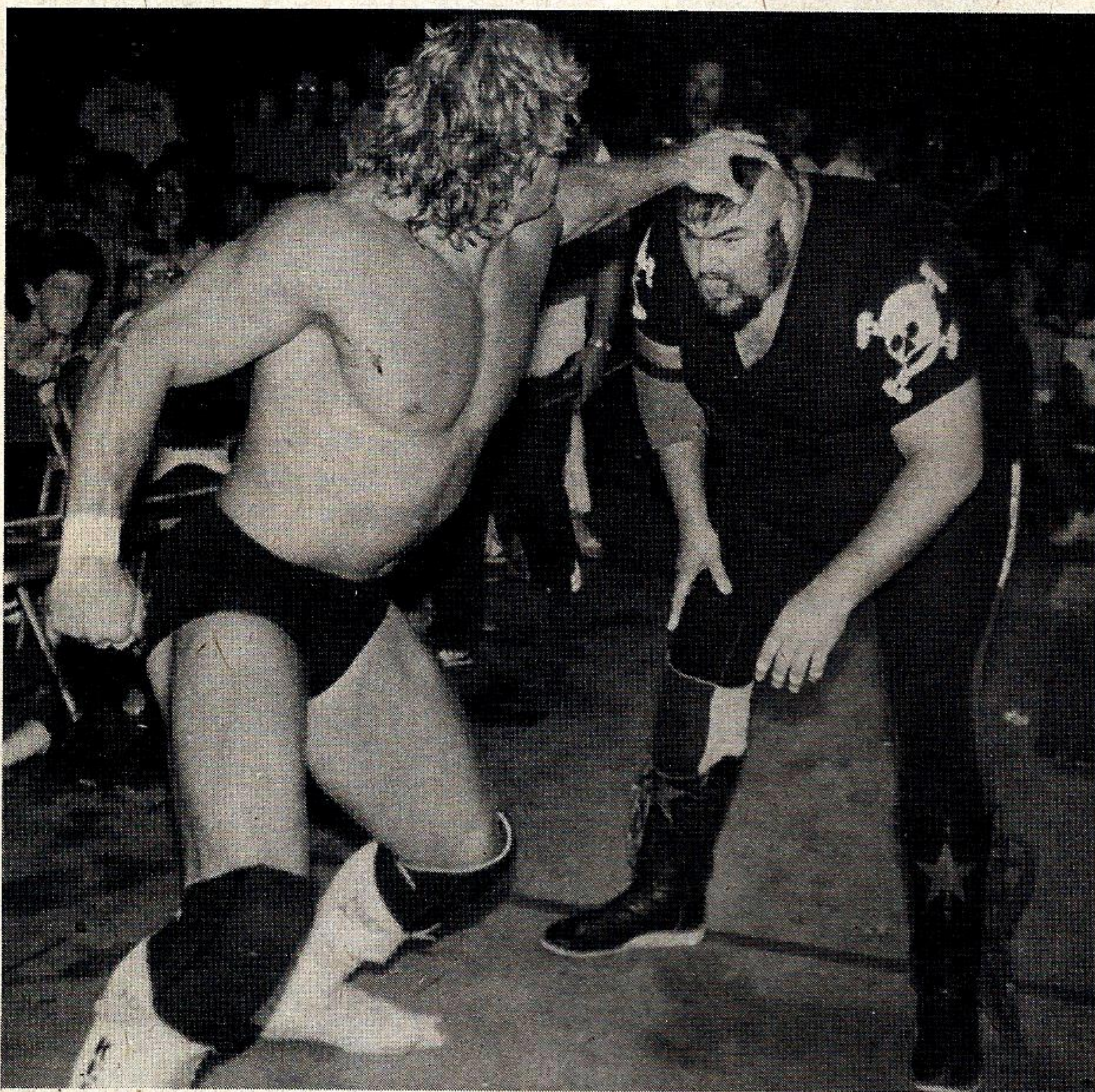
A: First of all, I'm not ready to close the book on 1985 just yet. I'm negotiating with Ric Flair's people right now for a possible title shot sometime in November. You know, Bill, last May 17 was no fluke. I beat Flair once, I can beat him again, and if I do, 1985 wouldn't be such a loss after all, would it?

Q: No, of course it wouldn't. But up until now, this hasn't been a Kerry Von Erich year. I haven't felt the thunder.

A: What makes for a successful year in professional wrestling? I think that the problem with our sport as opposed to other sports is that in wrestling it's hard to qualify what makes a successful year. If the Cowboys win 12 games and win the Super Bowl, then you know they've had a successful year. I've won between 85 and 90 percent of my matches in '85, which you'd have to agree is excellent, yet you—and others—can say that I haven't had a successful year. It's a peculiar sport.

Q: It seems as if you've spent over half the year feuding with One Man Gang. Why don't you tell us a little about that?

A: I've been fighting Gang a little longer than I'd have like to have



Kerry reaches back to throw a right hand at a doubled-over One Man Gang. A good percentage of Kerry's battles with OMG take place outside of the ring. The largest of the Von Erich brothers enjoys the challenge of wrestling the 468-pound Gang.

been, but face it, the man is tough. To me it's an incredible challenge trying to figure out a different way to beat a man who outweighs me by over 200 pounds. I've always considered myself a strong man, and wrestling Gang has given me the opportunity to see just how strong I really am.

Q: And the verdict?

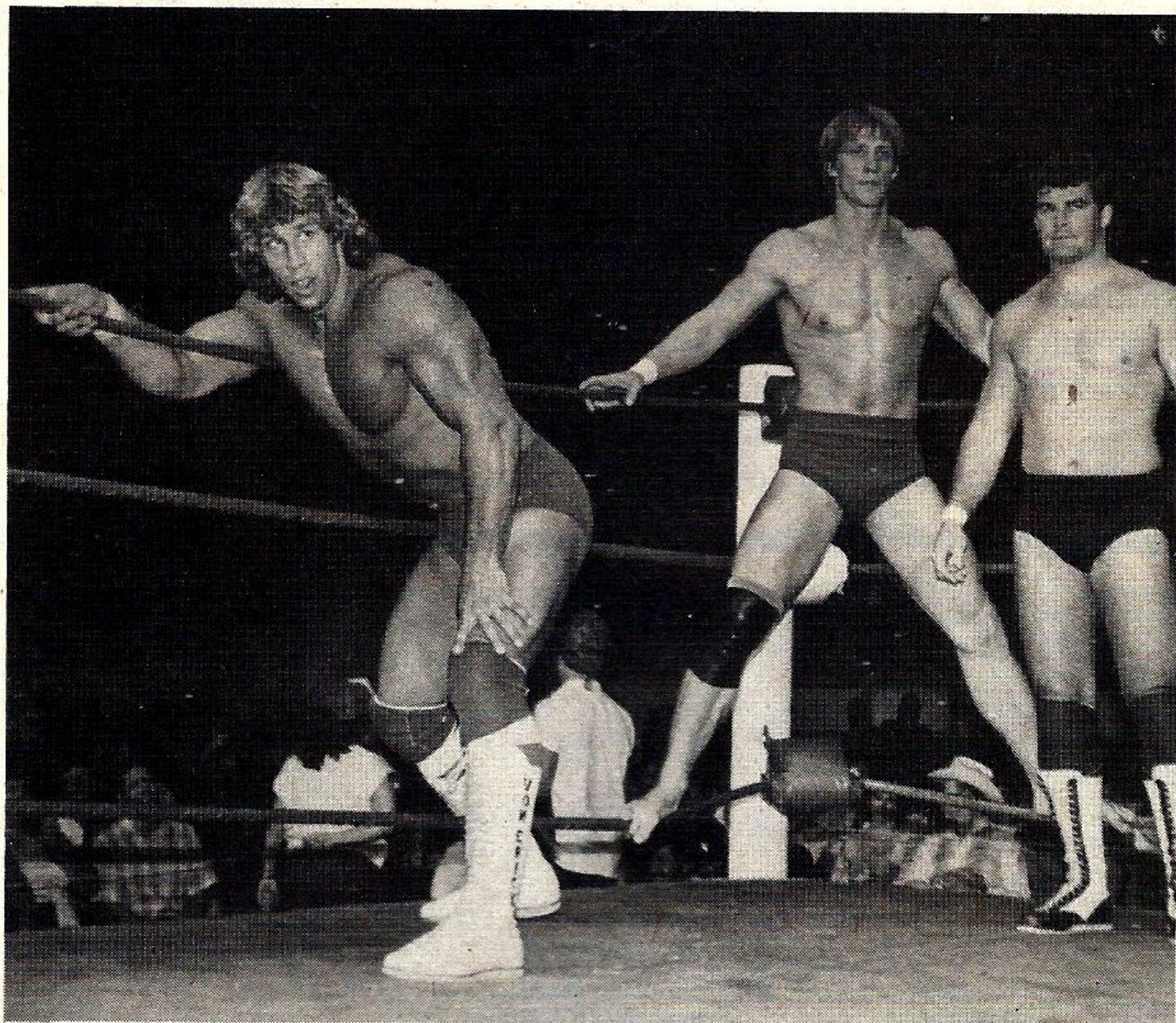
A: I gotta admit there were a couple of times when I surpassed my expectations. It just goes to prove that you can accomplish anything as long as you give it your best effort.

Q: How is Brian Adidas fitting in with you and Kevin?

A: Oh, Brian is great. Besides improving tremendously as a wrestler, he's a wonderful person—real easy to work with. And he's taught Kevin and myself something about deter-

mination. I've never met a man who works so hard.

Q: What do you think of the team of Gino Hernandez and Chris Adams?



Kerry Von Erich, Kevin Von Erich, and Brian Adidas (above) are the reigning World Class six-man tag team champions, having defeated One Man Gang, Mark Lewin, and Killer Brooks. It seems to Kerry that no matter what type of match he's in, he's always in the ring against One Man Gang (below).

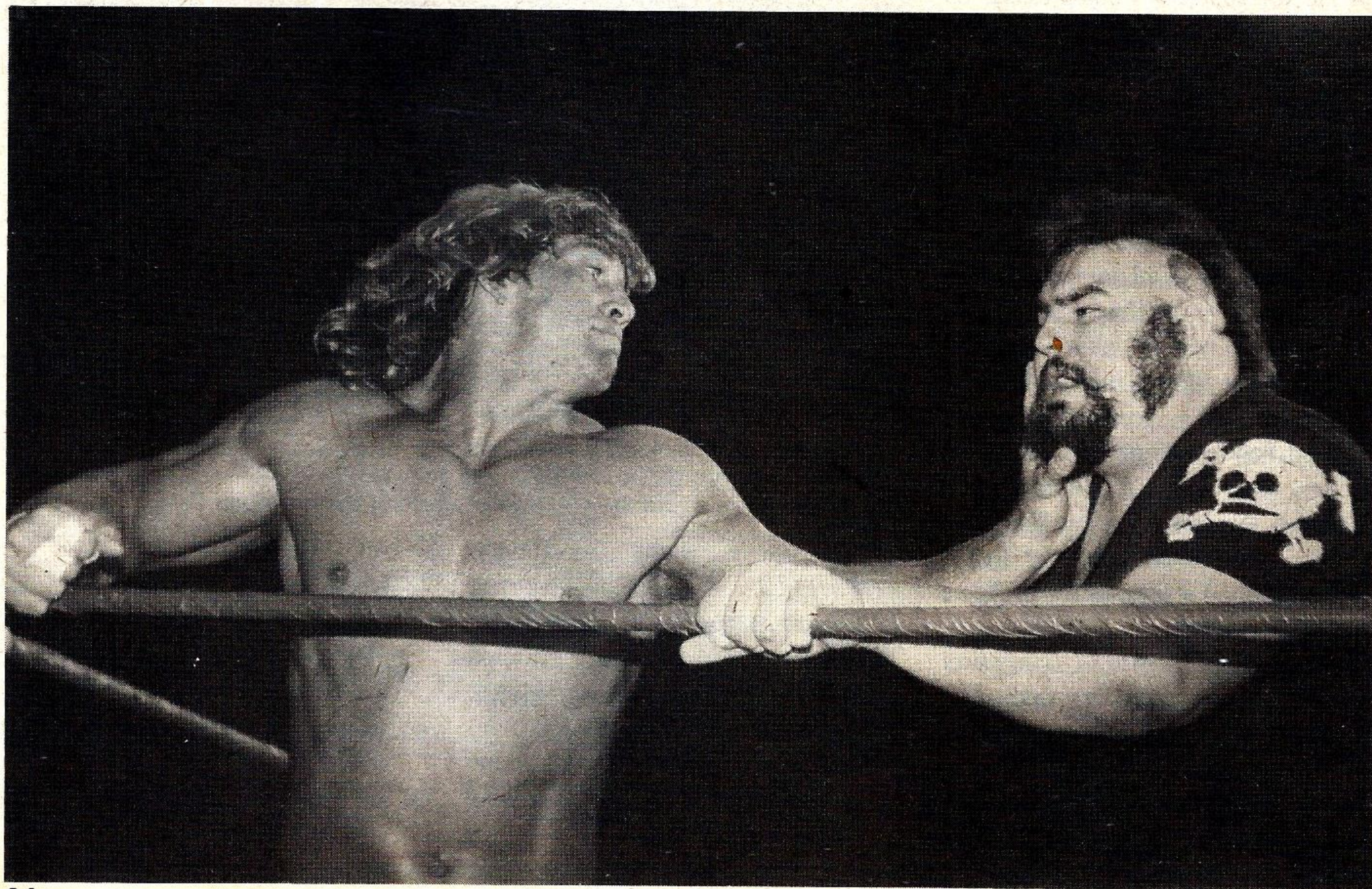
A: What can you say? Just when you think that you have a little breathing room, one of those guys will do something and you're right back into the fire. Between Hernandez and Adams and Mark Lewin and OMG and Killer Brooks, this part of the country can get pretty dangerous for a Von Erich.

Q: You, Kevin, and Brian seemed to handle Lewin, OMG, and Brooks pretty easily to win the title, though. In fact, you three seem unstoppable together.

A: Again, a lot of the credit must go to Brian. Kevin and I are fanatic in workouts, but Brian makes us look lazy. I really think our team can go any way we have to. If you want to duke it out, we can do that. If it's a scientific match you want, we can go that route. We are ready for any kind of action.

Q: The NWA had recently allowed Nikita and Ivan Koloff and Krusher Khrushchev to hold collectively the NWA World tag team title. Have you guys given any thought in doing that?

A: Not really, Bill. Like I said before,



there's enough action right here in Texas to keep us occupied. And I'll say this, and I'm sure Kevin would agree with me: When you start talking about world titles, the only one we want is Ric Flair's. The NWA title is it. I tasted from that cup and I'm thirsty again. Kevin just wants a sip. Someday down the road, perhaps, the Von Erichs will pursue the NWA tag team title, but not right now.

Q: What does 1986 have in store for the Von Erich family?

A: There you go rushing us again, Bill. Why are you so anxious to leave this year behind? Maybe you had some problems, huh Billy?

Q: No, ha, ha, ha? No, not at all. In fact, 1985 was the year that my first child, Hailey Brooke, was born. I'm in no hurry for it to end. I want Hailey to stay young as long as possible in this crazy world.

A: Well, congratulations, Bill. I think starting a family is just the right thing for you. Enough of those crazy bachelor days. Now I can answer your question. First and beyond everything else, I want 1986 to be a healthy one for our family. God knows we've had some tragedy in the past and I hope that Mike's recovery signals a turning point in that chapter. Everything, including the NWA championship is secondary to that. Otherwise, I look forward to a good year. Better than this year, if I listen to you and some other critics. I'm healthy. I feel good and I feel strong. Like always, Kevin and I will be working on different strategies, trying different moves.

Q: For instance?

A: Nah, c'mon, Bill. Don't want to give away the family jewels. We've been toying with some combinations that might shock a few people, even a veteran like yourself. Just wait and see.

Q: We'll be looking forward to it Kerry. Good luck and again, our best to Mike.

A: Thank you, Bill. ☐

Wrestling 85

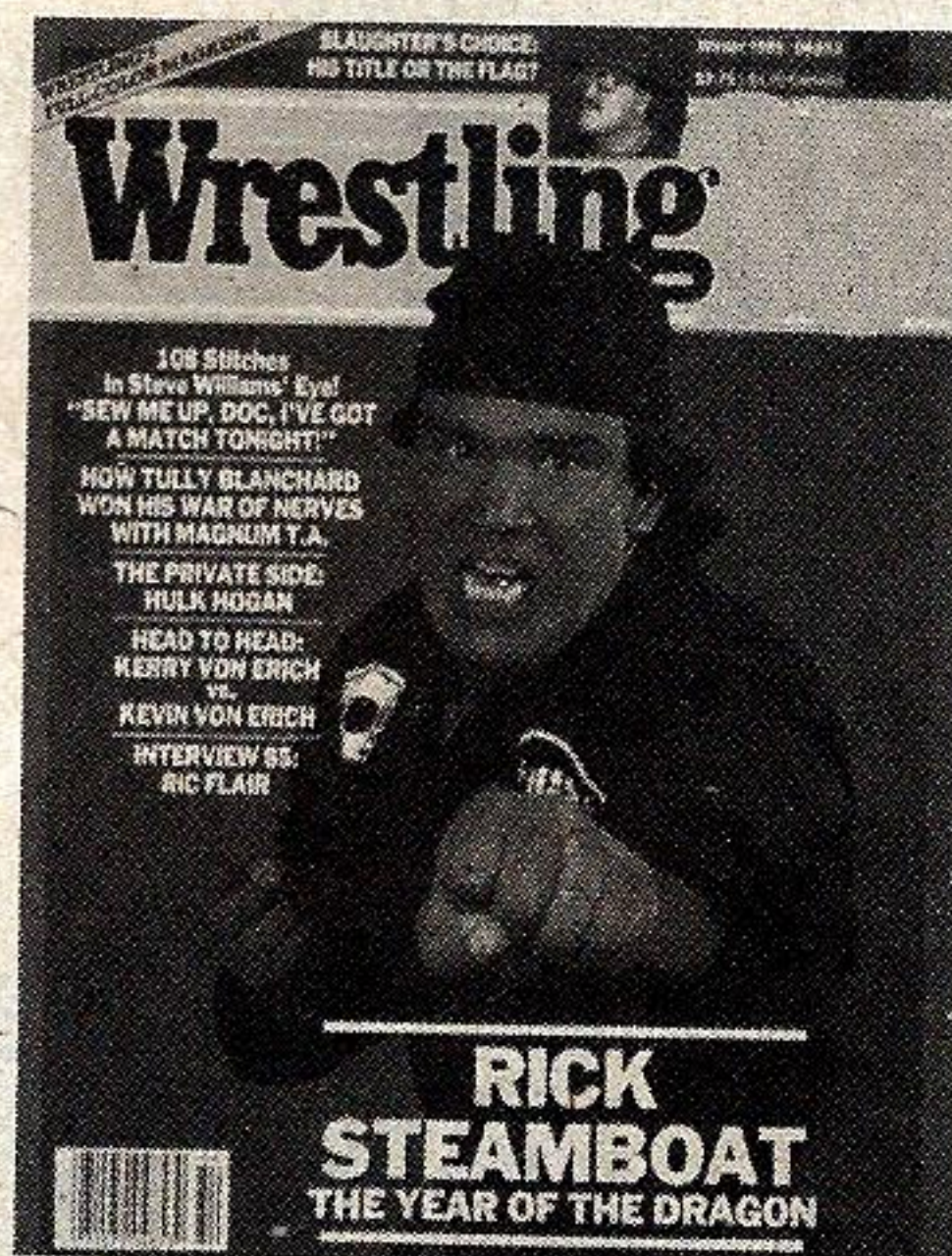
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The Winter 1985 issue is now on sale at your local newsstand!

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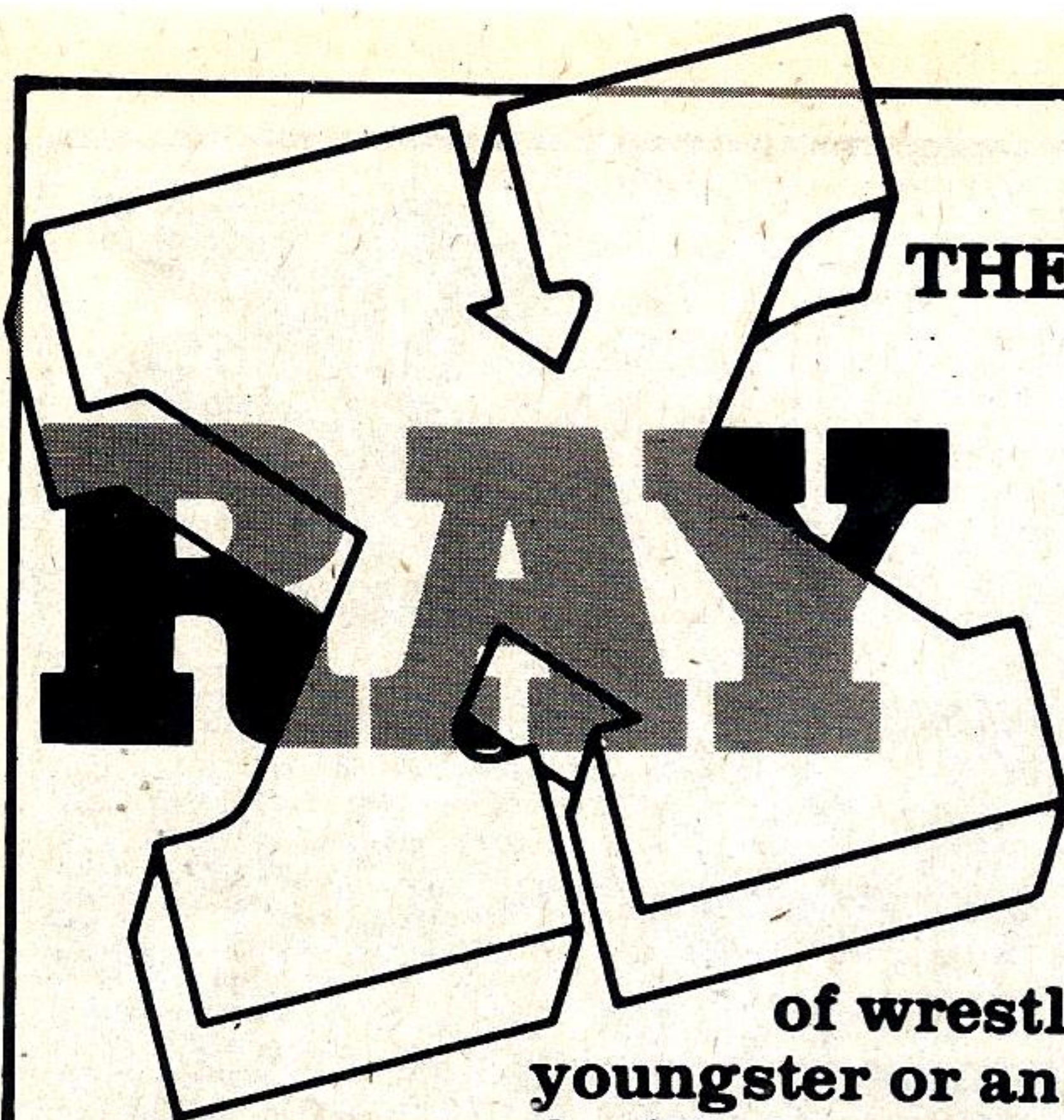


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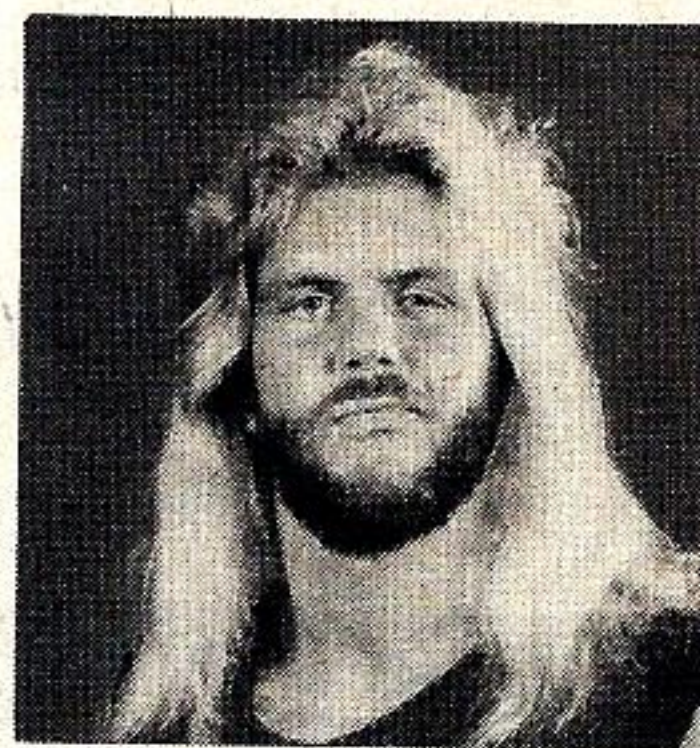
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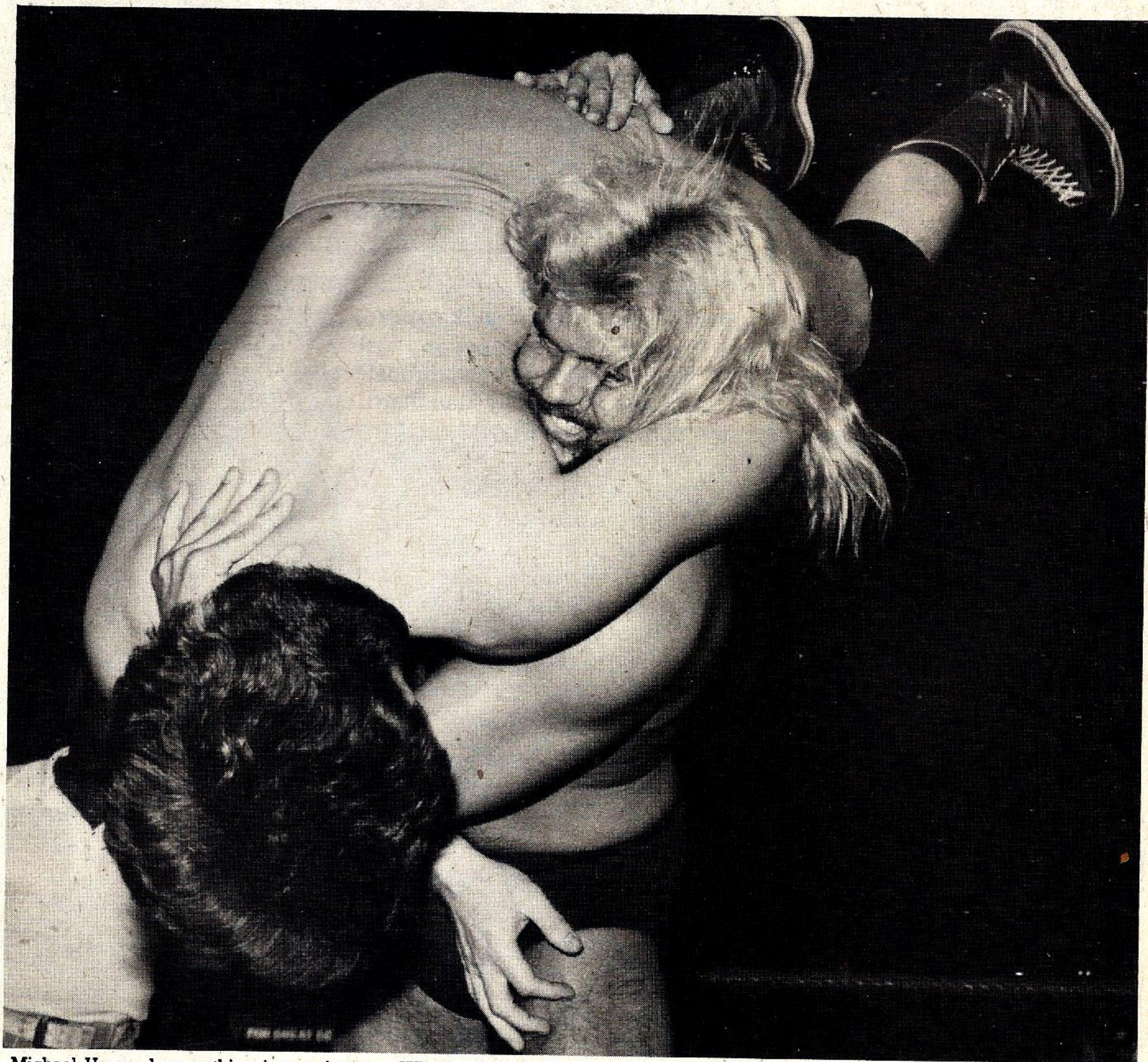


THE WRESTLER PANEL EXAMINES

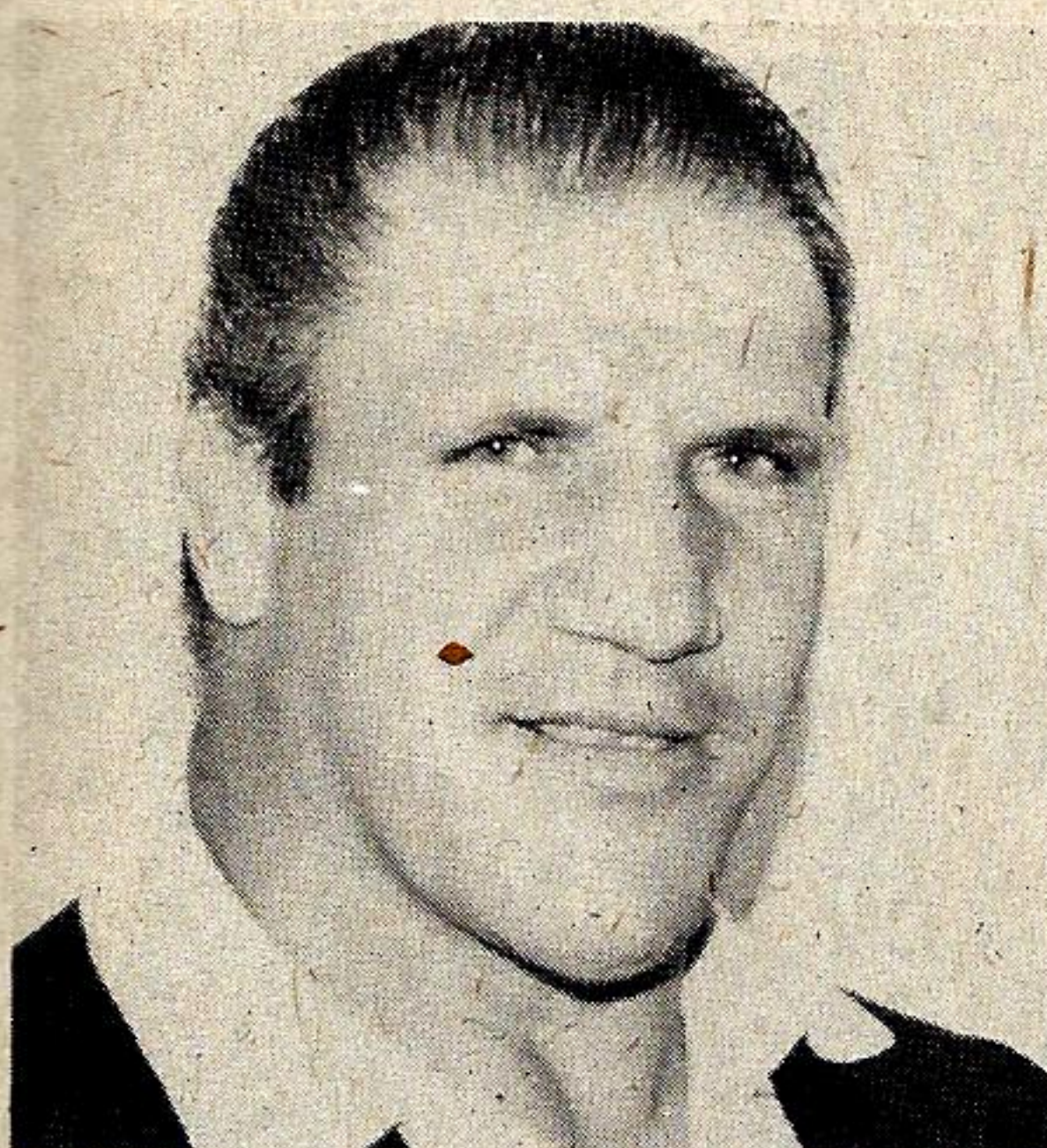


MICHAEL HAYES

Each month
THE WRESTLER'S panel of experts
will offer their candid opinions of one
of wrestling's stars. Whether an up-and-coming
youngster or an established superstar in his own right,
our panel will always be frank and honest without fear of reprisal



Michael Hayes does nothing in a quiet way. Whether he's in the ring along with his Freebird partners, playing his music, or just hanging out in a bar, Hayes makes his presence known. For the last five years or so, Hayes has made his presence known in a big way in this sport. Can he go all the way to the top? The next five years should answer that question.



BRUNO SAMMARTINO

"I don't like this Freebird Michael Hayes at all. I don't think he knows what he wants in life. Does he want to be a rock 'n' roll star or a wrestler? Does he want to be a model or an athlete? He came into the WWF and left after only a couple of weeks. If you ask me, he's just floating around looking for a path in his life."

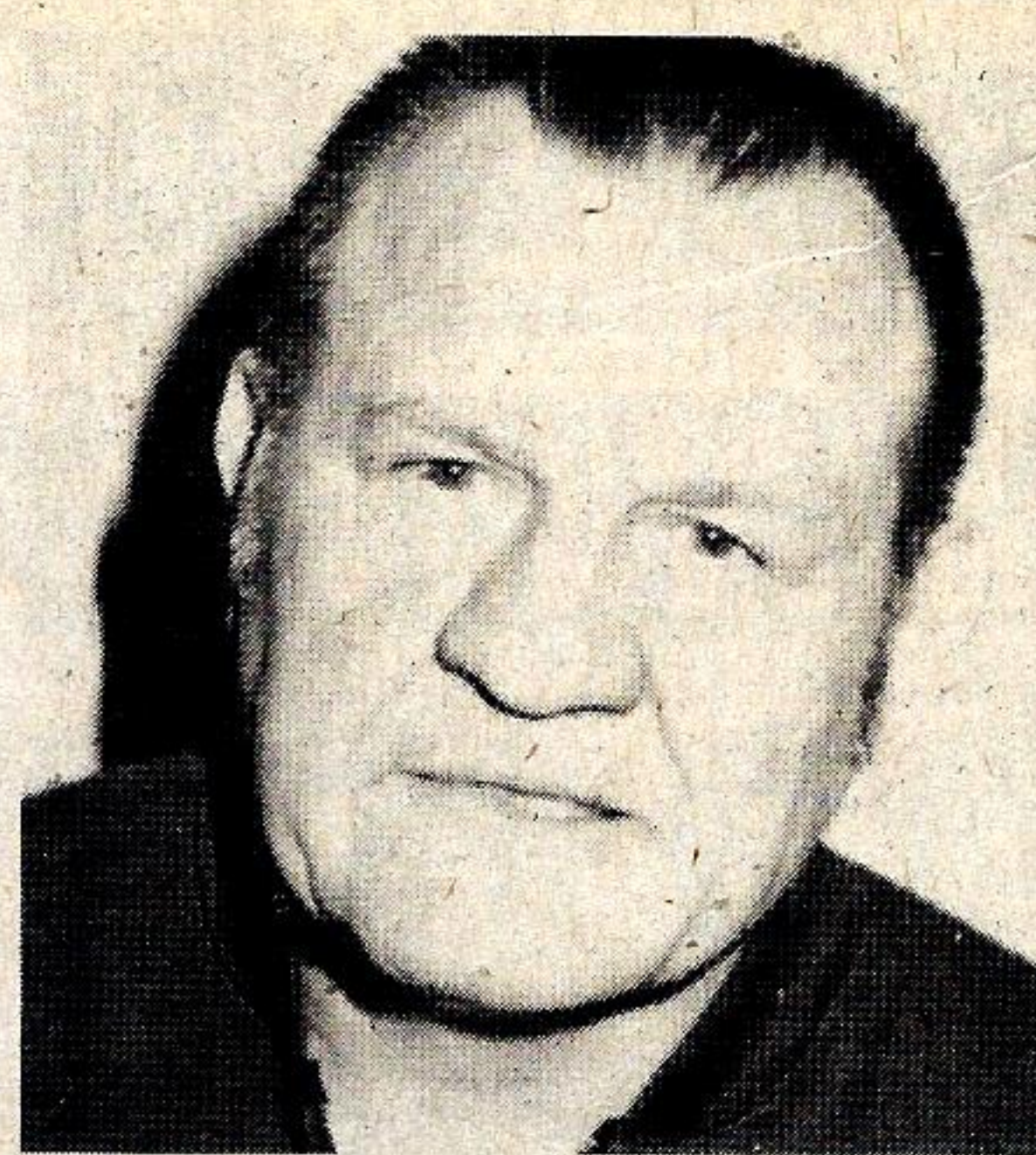
Bruno Sammartino is known as wrestling's "Living Legend." He is the most popular wrestler to ever hold the WWF title.



KILLER KOWALSKI

"Don't let this guy's long blond hair and pretty boy looks fool you. This Michael Hayes is one tough bird; tough *Freebird*, that is. I admire the guy. He's challenged for both the NWA and the AWA World titles in 1985, and he's come damn close to winning both of those belts on several occasions. He'll go all the way some day."

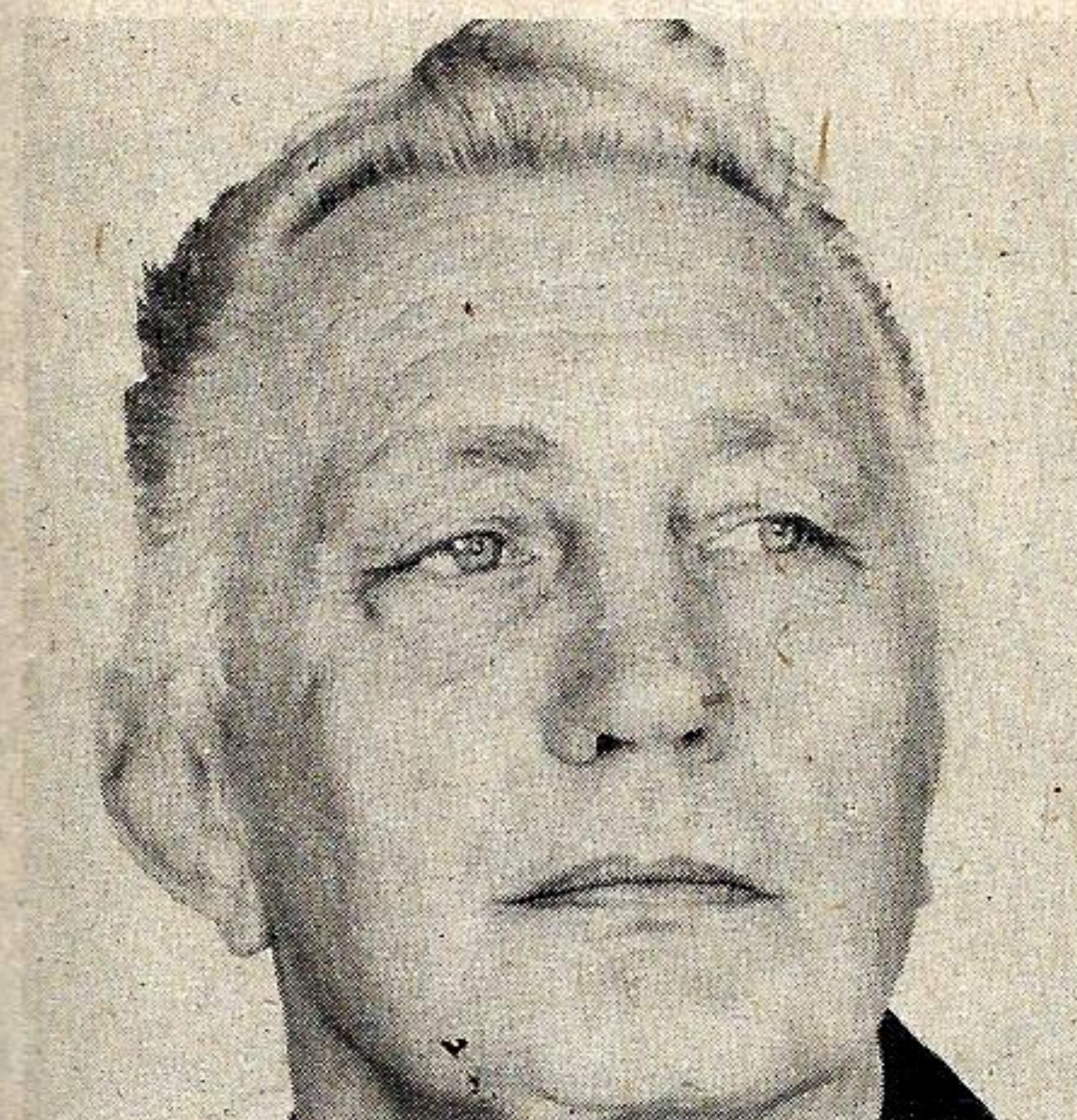
Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rulebreakers in the sport's history, runs a wrestling school in Reading, Massachusetts.



GENE KINISKI

"A few more years along down the path he's traveling now, and Michael Hayes will be world champion. He's got the singles wrestling skills to go along with his tag team skills. He's a well-rounded wrestler who can do it all, and he's got a colorful personality to match. He's deceptively rugged, and a hell of a grappler."

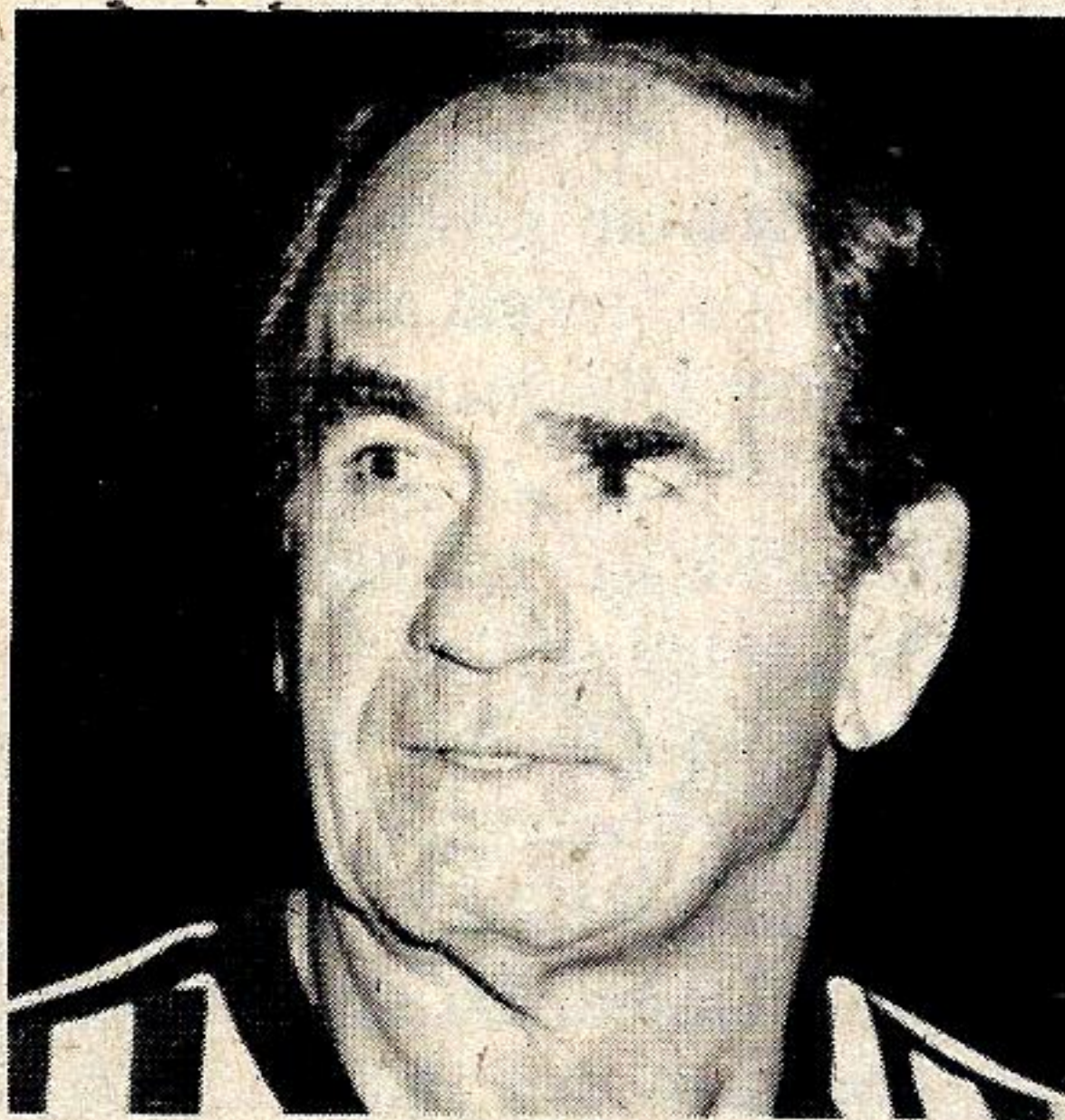
Gene Kiniski is a rugged Canadian who was NWA World champion in the late 1960s.



BUDDY ROGERS

"In the world of wrestling, I'm a man of science. Michael Hayes, he's a man of brawling. Take the figure-four leglock; Hayes tries to bully himself out of the hold rather than scientifically reverse it. Frankly, I think he's too far gone to gain any considerable scientific skills. Once a brawling bum, always a brawling bum."

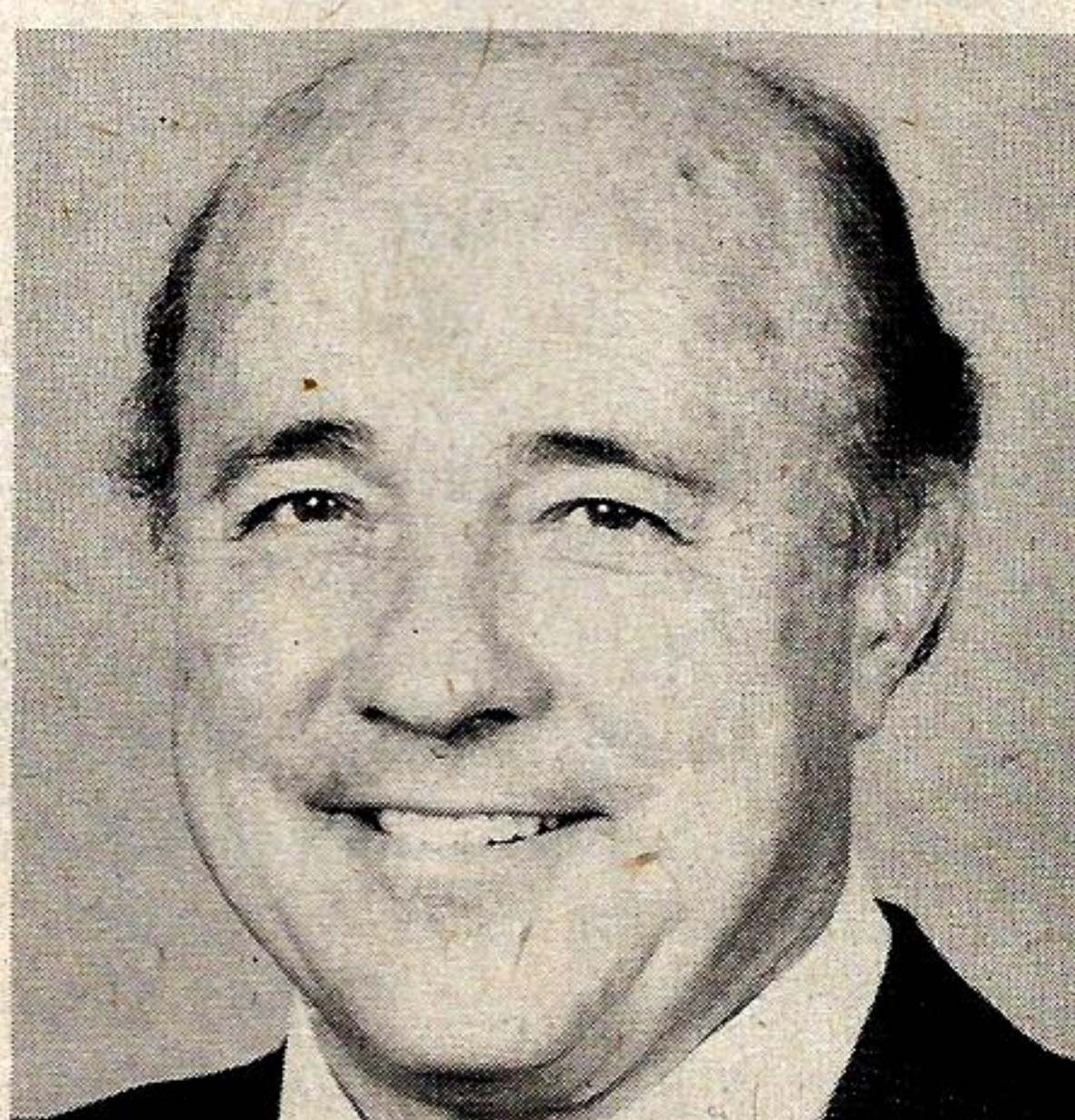
Buddy Rogers is the only man to hold both the NWA World title and the WWF title.



LOU THESZ

"Let's face it, Michael Hayes is a hothead. He's young, he's rebellious, and he likes looking at himself in the mirror more than he likes sparring and improving his skills in the gym. You can't blame him for that, it's just that he's never really grown up. It's too bad, because he's got enough raw talent to have been a great wrestler."

Lou Thesz held the NWA World title six times during his fabulous 50-year career. Many consider him the greatest all-round wrestler in history.



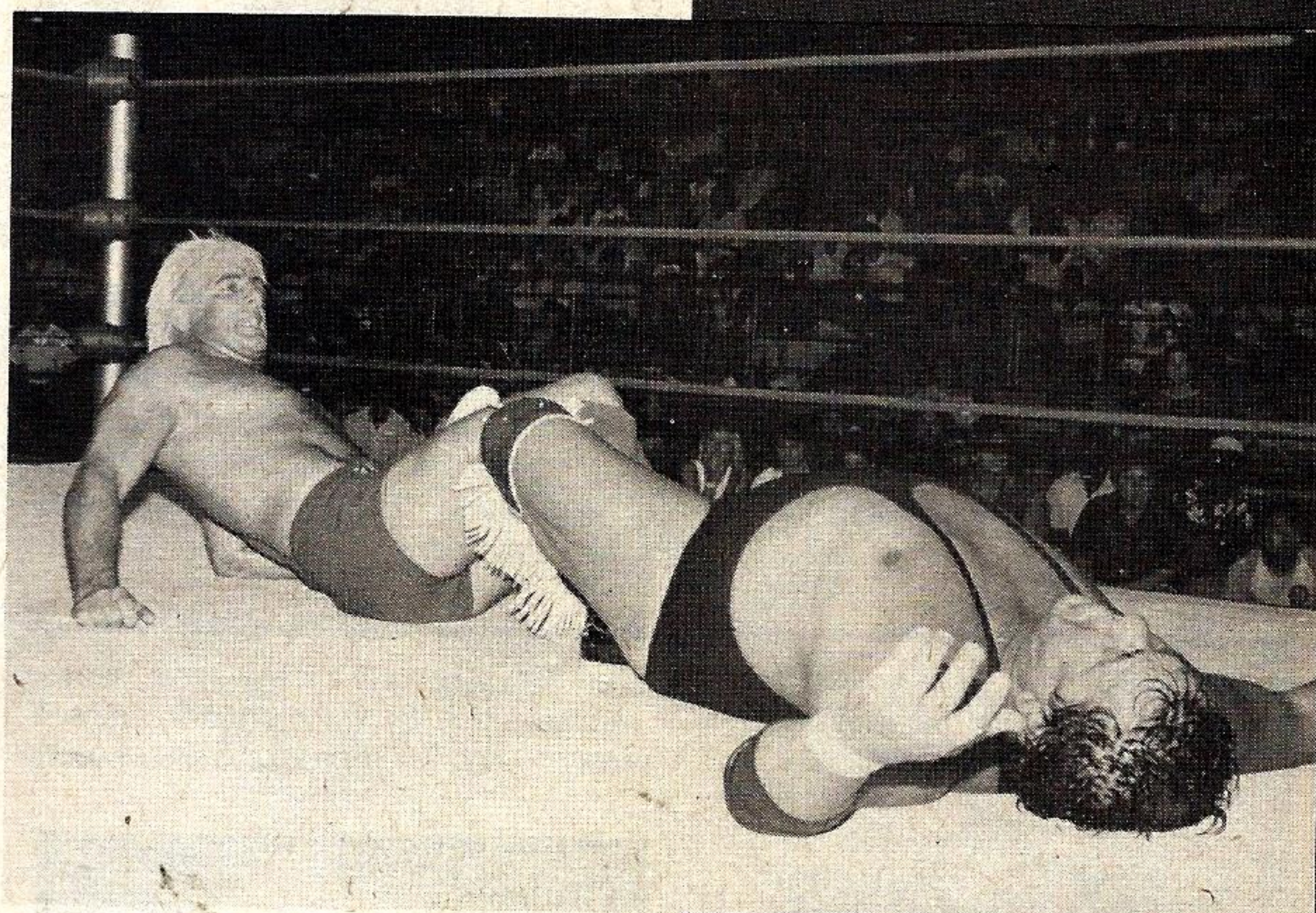
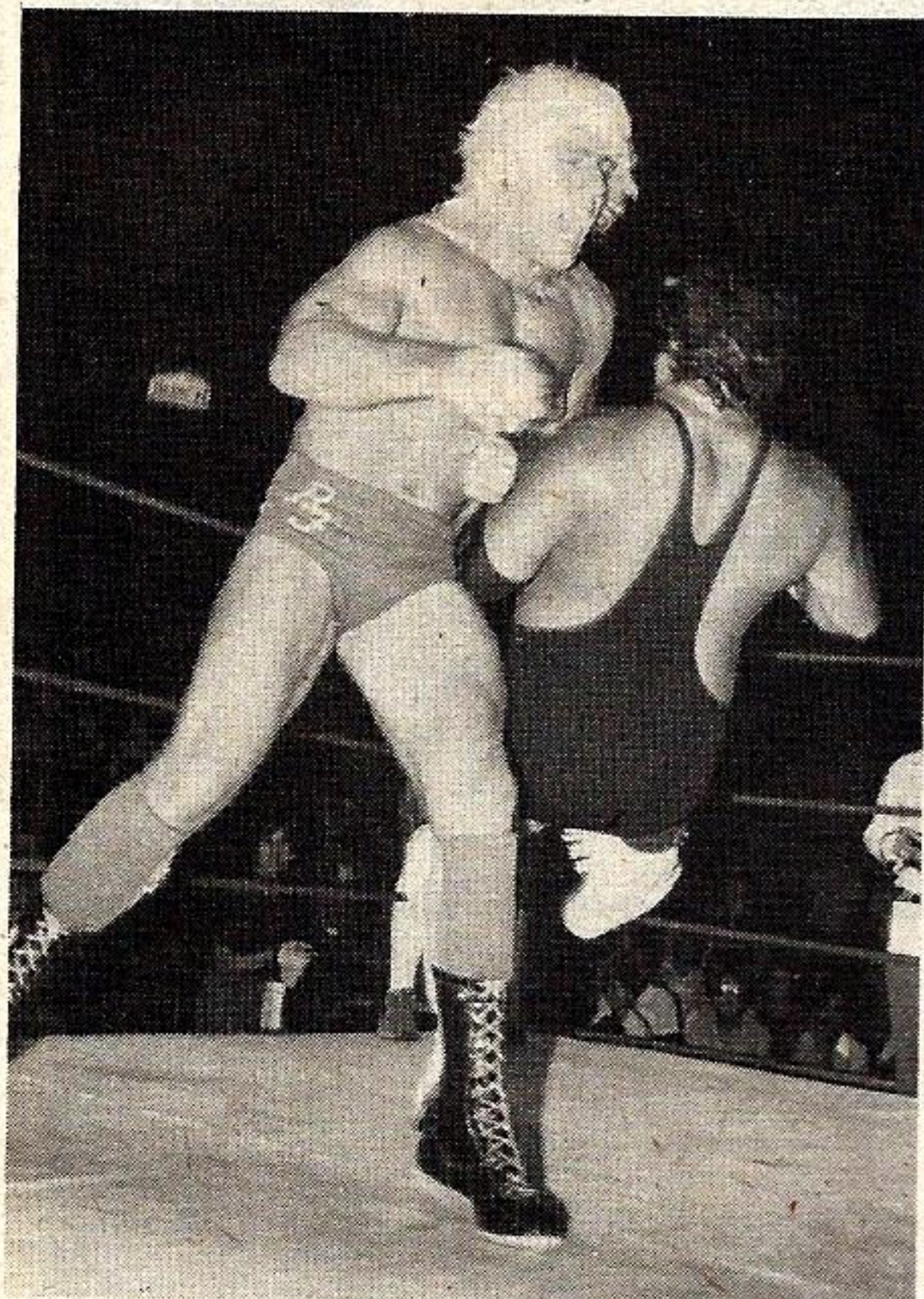
VERNE GAGNE

"I find Michael Hayes to be nothing but a bragging, preening, strutting, rulebreaking fool. He's concerned about personal glory, and he'll do anything to attain it. He's not above having his Freebird partners Terry Gordy or Buddy Roberts interfere on his behalf. He has aspirations for a world title, but no skill to obtain it. I despise him."

Verne Gagne held the AWA World title a record 11 times. He was voted "Best Scientific Wrestler" of the last 25 years by the wrestling media.

Ric Flair Collects His Own Bounty:

"WHY PAY FLUNKIES, I DO IT BETTER MYSELF!"



DANGLE A CHECK worth \$20,000 in the air and you'll find that there are plenty of people willing to snap it out of your hands.

Ric Flair has done this for the past several months in Florida. "Take my money, please," Flair seemed to be saying. And all anyone had to do in order to collect the money was to put Wahoo McDaniel out of the NWA World title picture.

Why?

"Look, I'm a busy man," Flair explained in an interview shortly after the bounty offer was announced, "I don't have time to deal with Wahoo McDaniel. I have a lot of challengers, *real* challengers, *worthy* challengers, who deserve title shots. I can't accommodate all these other individuals if Wahoo keeps monopolizing my title defense schedule. It's ridiculous!"

Flair was referring in particular to a situation in March where Mc-

Daniel bought out several contracts from other challengers and wrestled Flair in four title matches in four days.

"McDaniel is like a pesky mosquito," Flair continued, "and I've been bothered enough by him. This bounty is my flyswatter."

Kevin Sullivan tried to collect the money and failed. So did Kamala. And Abdullah the Butcher. And Dory Funk Jr. And Hercules Hernandez. And Rip Rogers. And Rip Oliver.

And as the summer of 1985 grew hotter, the list of mercenaries grew longer.

And as the list of failures grew longer, so too did the number of petitions McDaniel filed with the NWA for repeated title matches with Flair.

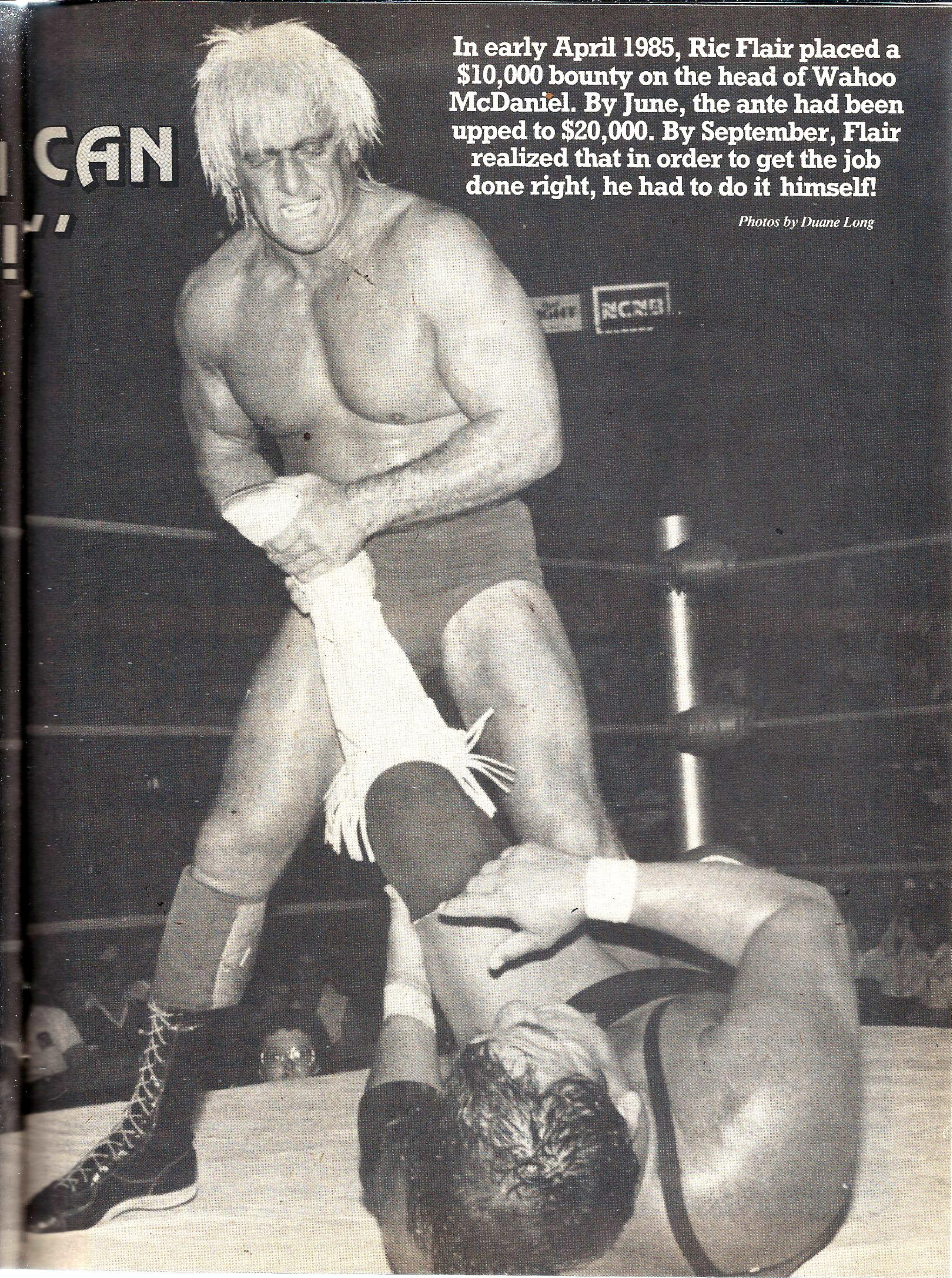
"I was getting bogged down in paperwork from McDaniel," NWA President Bob Geigel told *The* (Continued on page 58)

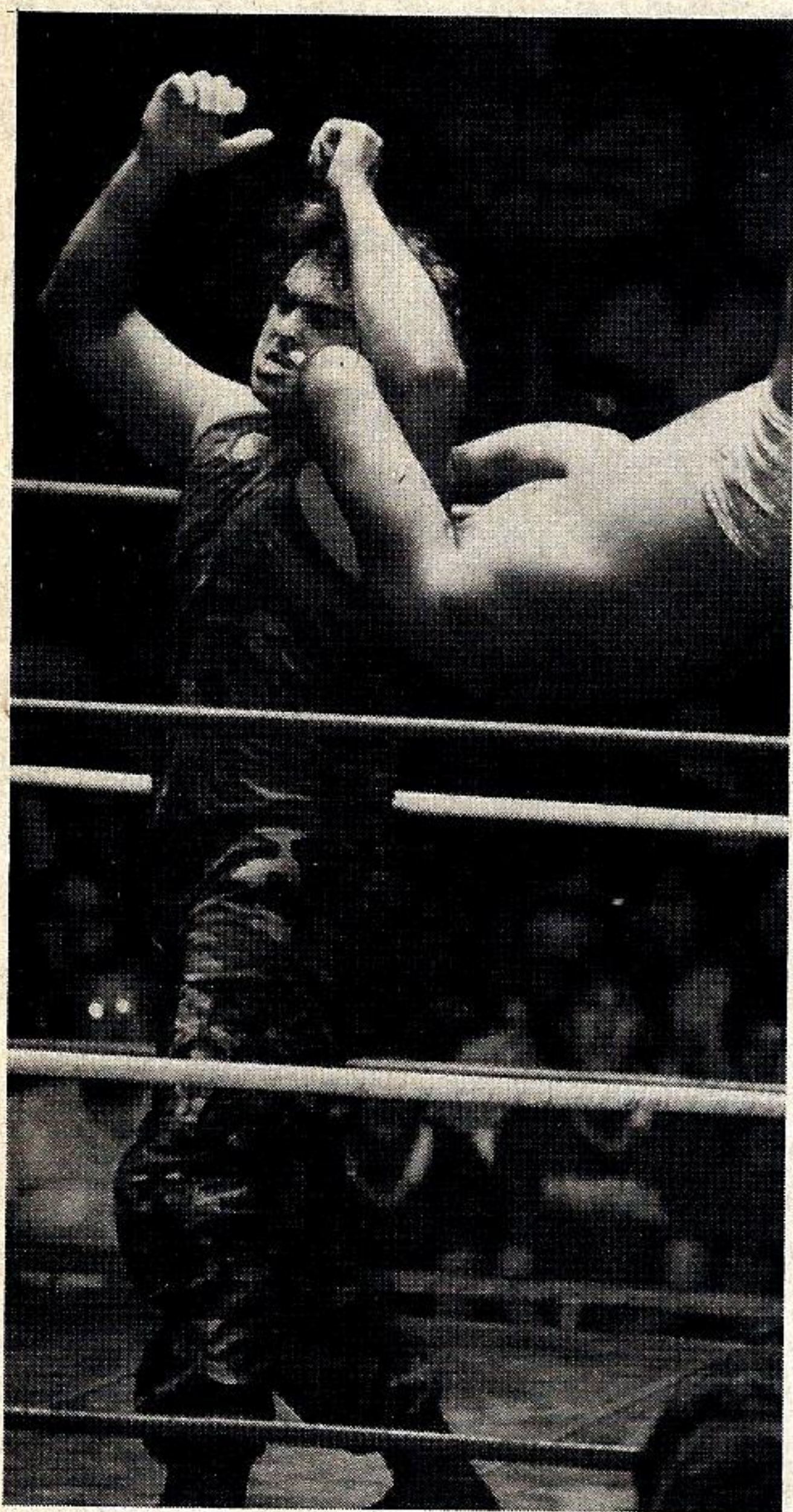
Flair barrels into McDaniel, sending him sprawling to the mat (top left). The NWA champion applies a figure-four leglock (above) and repeats the maneuver later in the match (opposite page).

CAN

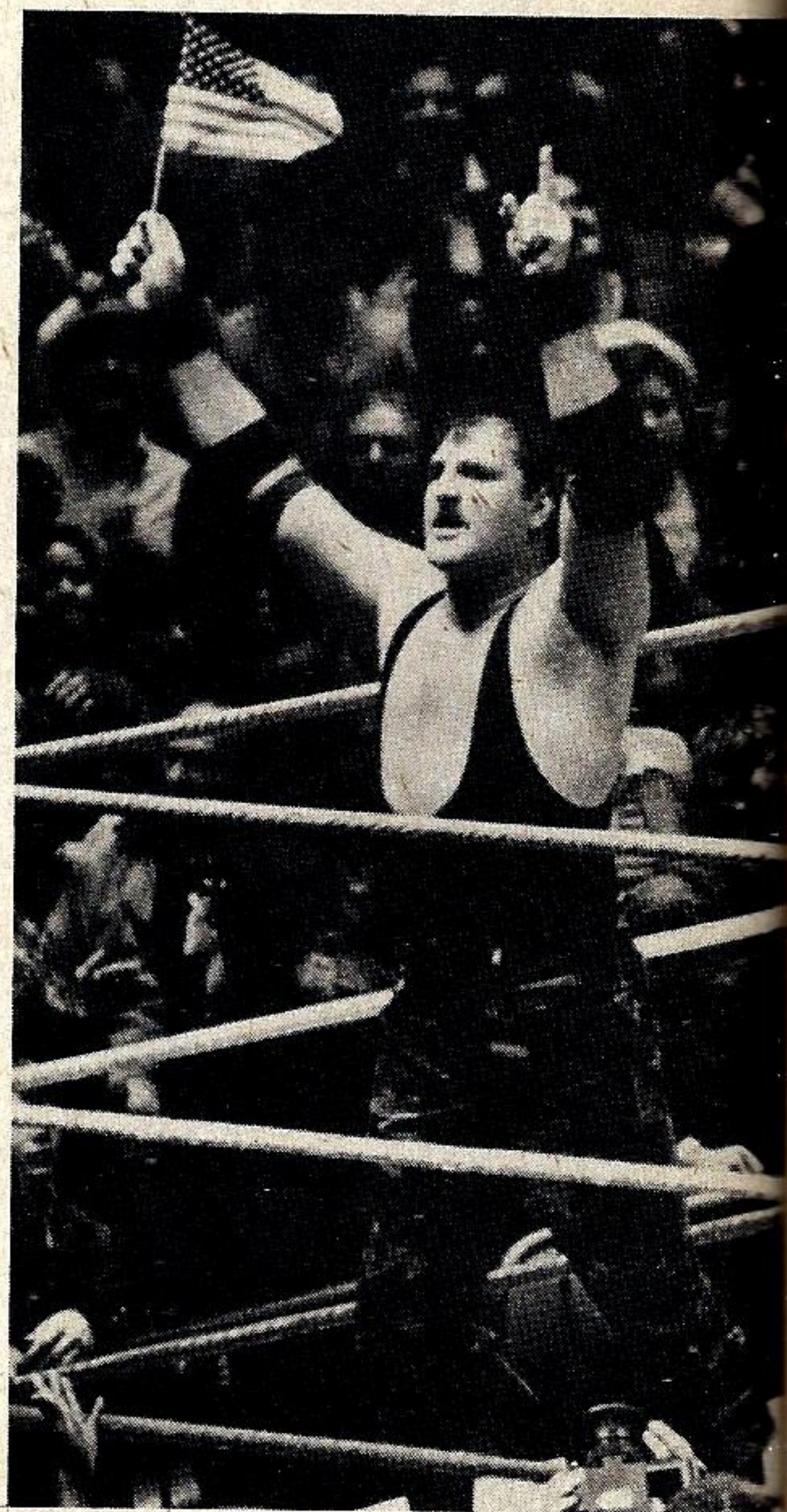
In early April 1985, Ric Flair placed a \$10,000 bounty on the head of Wahoo McDaniel. By June, the ante had been upped to \$20,000. By September, Flair realized that in order to get the job done right, he had to do it himself!

Photos by Duane Long





Haunted By The Shadow of Sgt. Slaughter



CPL. KIRSCHNER'S LOSING BATTLE

By Matt Brock

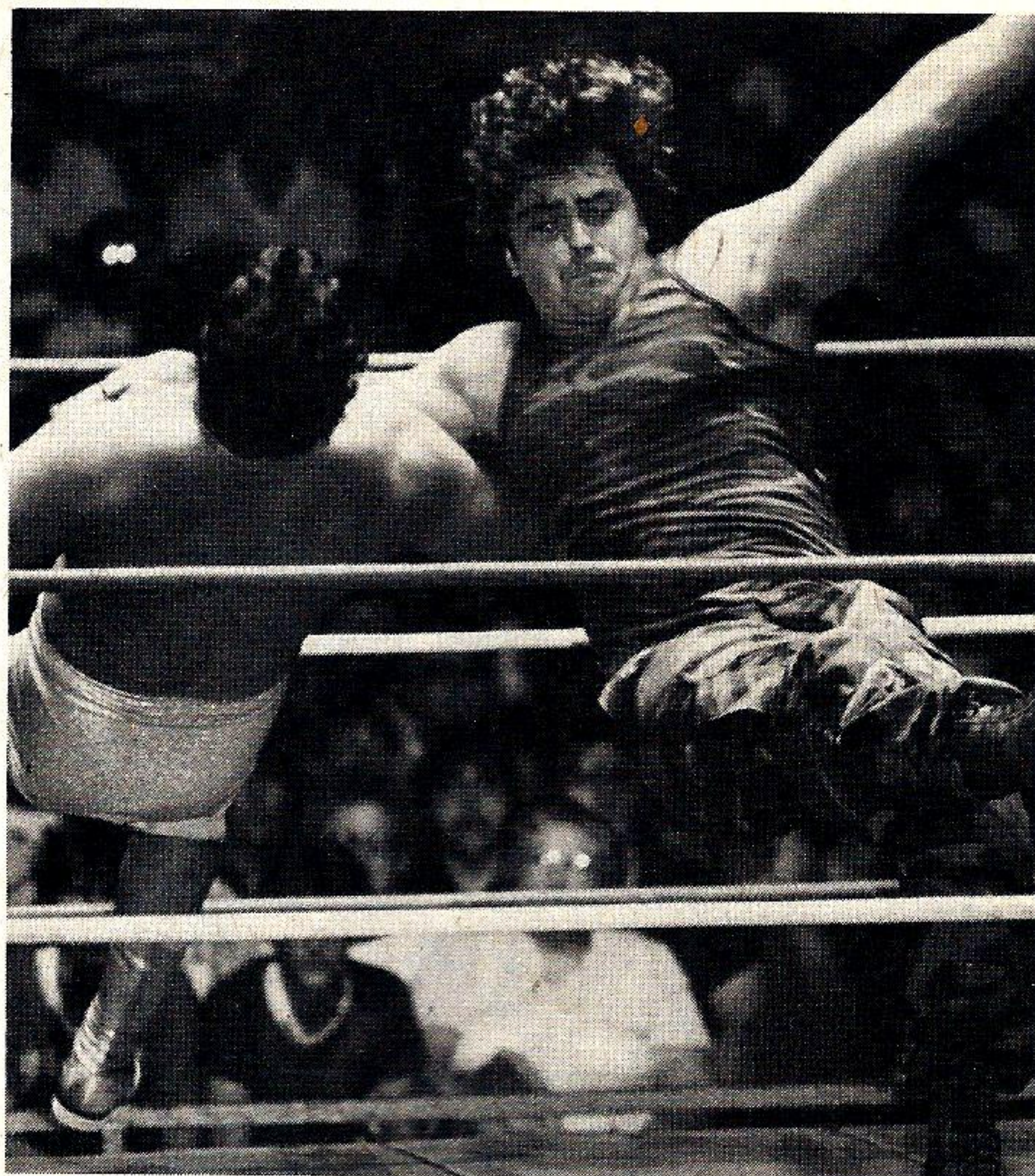
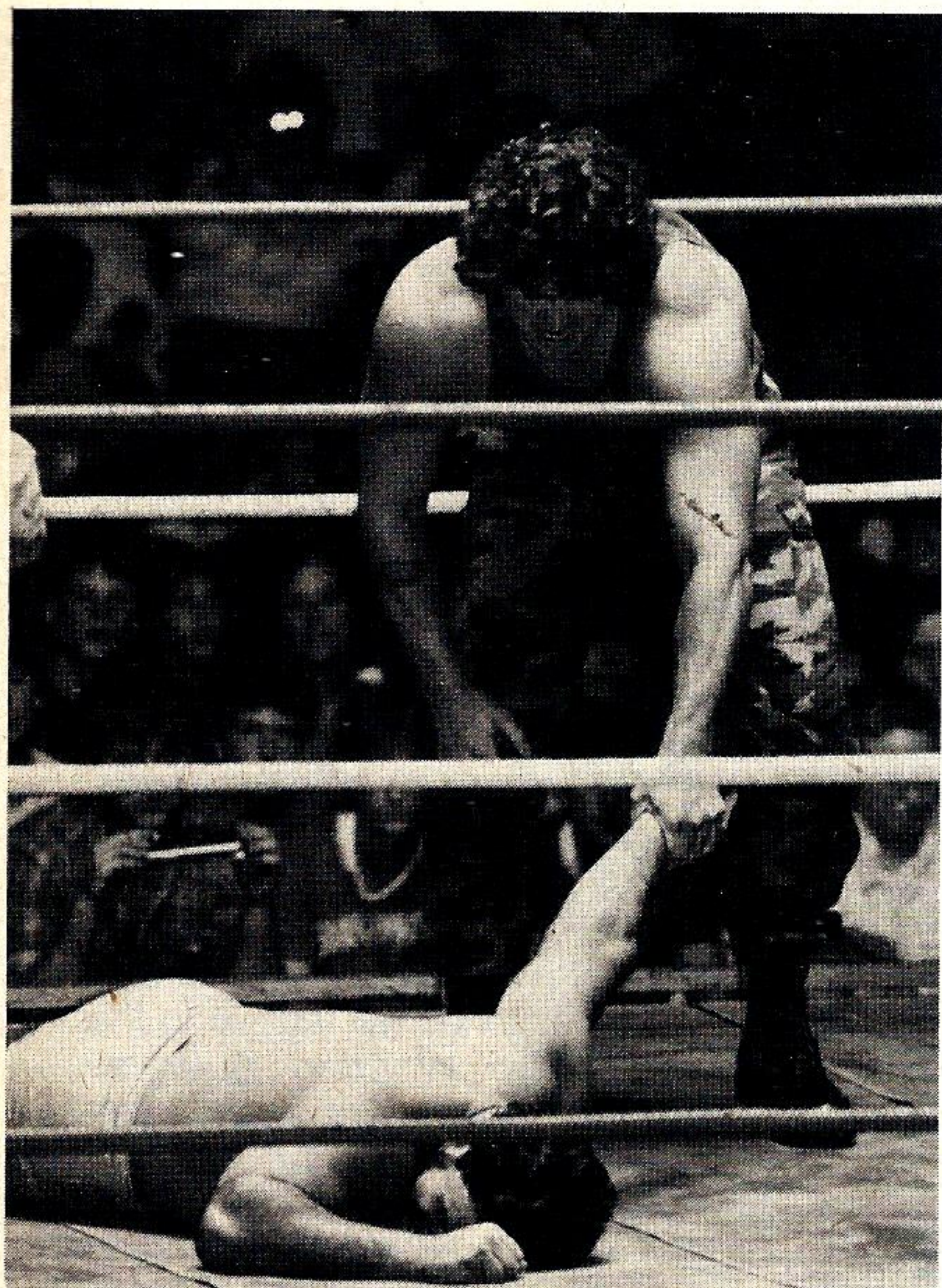
LIFE IS A string of coincidences sewn together by a series of accidents. In this case, the accident was Sgt. Slaughter leaving the WWF to go with the AWA. The "coincidence" was the sudden emergence in the WWF of a wrestler named Cpl. Kirschner, who appeals to the fans' patriotism much as the departed Slaughter did.

But where Slaughter is an original ("The one, the only," was how Vince McMahon referred to the Sarge—when Slaughter was

When Sgt. Slaughter left the WWF, he left behind not only a legacy of wrestling success, but an image of inimitable proportion. Now, allegedly out of the 82nd Airborne emerges America's latest would-be hero, Cpl. Kirschner. Can this Rambo-come-lately replace Sgt. Slaughter in the hearts and minds of the fans?

on Vinnie's payroll), Kirschner parades around like an extra from *An Officer And A Gentleman*. But Kirschner is too young to be condemned for his flashy good looks. Should he stick around long enough, Kirschner will become very friendly with his neighborhood physician. He will be cut, his face will be scarred. If he's not up to the physical demands of this brutal sport, he can be seriously hurt.

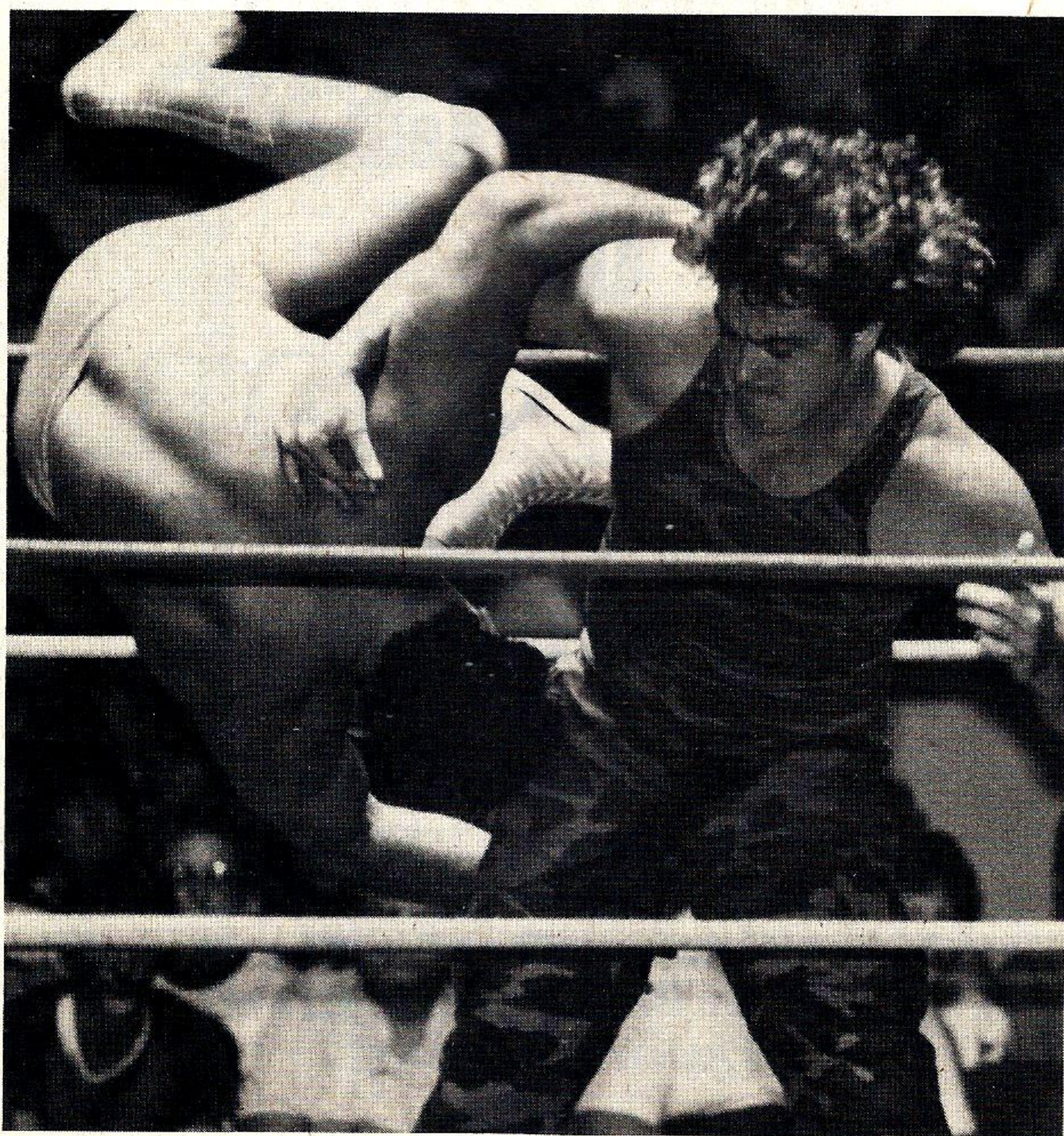
The first time I saw Kirschner wrestle was in a match against a scrub named Gama Singh. Obviously, I wasn't expecting Kirschner to be as good as



Cpl. Kirschner's armtwist has Gama Singh in agony (left). Kirschner's clothesline, delivered at a 45-degree angle to the mat, is not as effective at it should be (above). His hiproll, however, is excellent (below).

Slaughter. (In fact, according to some very informed sources, the Corporal used to wrestle in the WWF under the name of R.T. Reynolds, and, if that's true, his won-loss record is considerably under .500.) As good as Slaughter is, everyone is aware that there are many wrestlers with more natural talent than Slaughter, but none with half his charisma and desire. Slaughter always wrestled way beyond his natural abilities. This was what I was looking for in Kirschner, and I found it to be lacking in bushels.

Oh, he beat Gama Singh, which is nothing to write home about, but he did so in a style void of any passion. This alleged successor to Sgt. Slaughter failed once to incite the crowd to its feet. Of course, much depends upon his opponent. Should Kirschner get the opportunity to wrestle The Iron Sheik or Nikolai Volkoff, he will have to reviewed
(Continued on page 66)





**RESULTS
OF OUR
20th
ANNIVERSARY
POLL:
THE 10
GREATEST
WRESTLERS
OF
THE
Wrestler
YEARS**

For almost six months, ballots have been flooding the offices of *The Wrestler*. But now, all the votes have been counted and the results are in. These are the top 10 wrestlers of *The Wrestler* years!

BACK IN THE August 1985 issue of *The Wrestler*, we asked readers to submit to us their choices for the top 10 wrestlers of *The Wrestler* years. The occasion was the beginning of the 20th year of publication of the oldest and most-respected wrestling magazine anywhere.

The response was nothing short of phenomenal, second only to the response we receive in the annual *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* Achievement Awards voting. Ballots came from as far away as Kyoto, Japan!

A few things should be noted about the voting before giving you the results.

The voting was restricted to cover the top 10 of *The Wrestler* years (1966-present), not of all time. As a result, wrestling legends such as Lou Thesz and Buddy Rogers, whose wrestling primes occurred prior to 1966, did not finish in the voting.

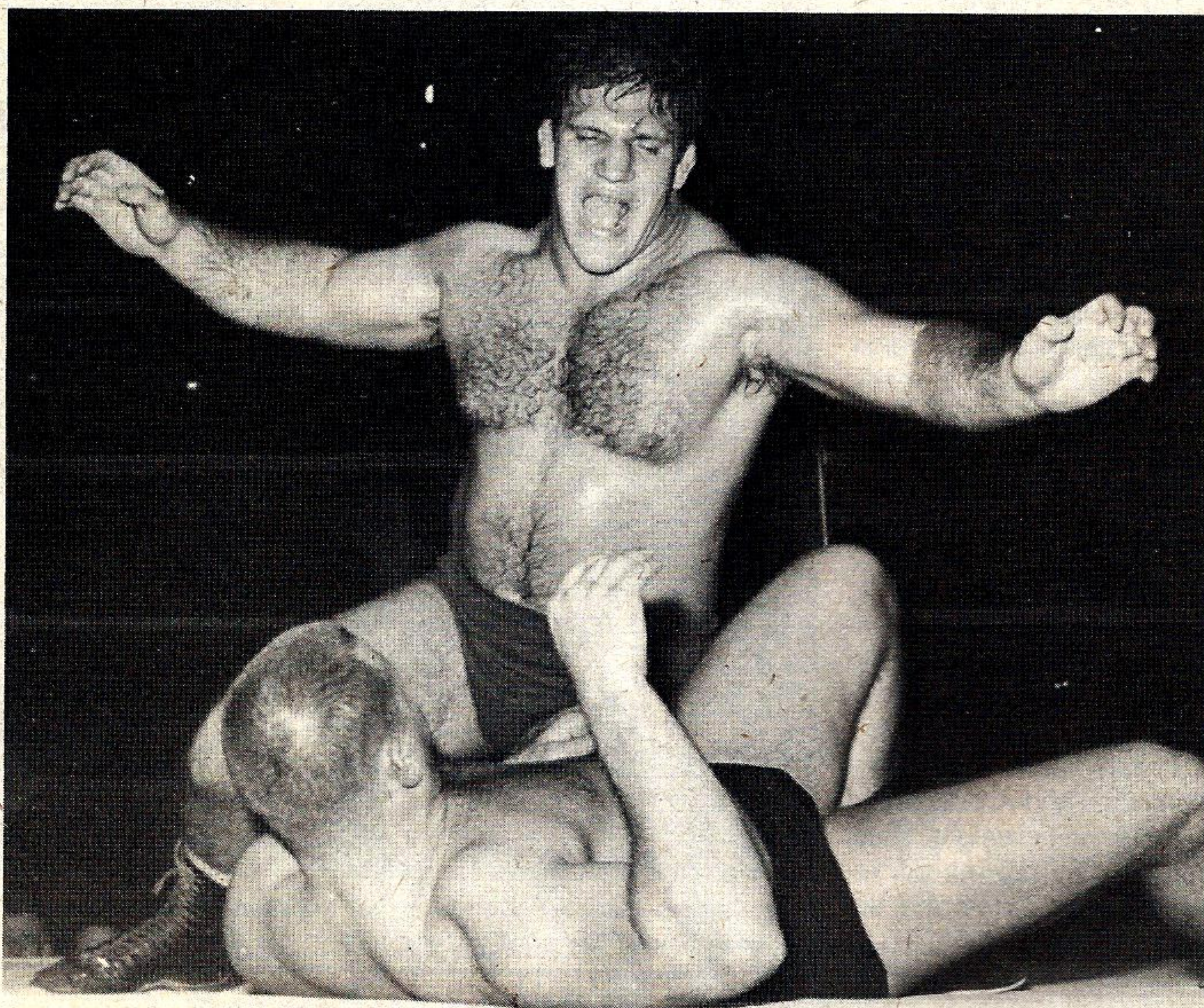
Also, as something of a guide, the editors of *The Wrestler* got together and provided their list of not the top 10, but the top 12 wrestlers of the past 20 years. It is interesting to note that eight of those 12 wrestlers finished in the final list of the fans' cumulative top 10 (The ones who didn't were Bob Backlund, Don Leo Jonathan, Mil Mascaras, and The Sheik). The two wrestlers who made the fans' top 10 that were not on our list were Fritz Von Erich and Dory Funk Jr.

Here now, from one to 10, in order of the total votes they received, are the top 10 wrestlers of *The Wrestler* years, along with their most notable achievements, as you voted for them:

THE FANS' TOP 10

1 BRUNO SAMMARTINO

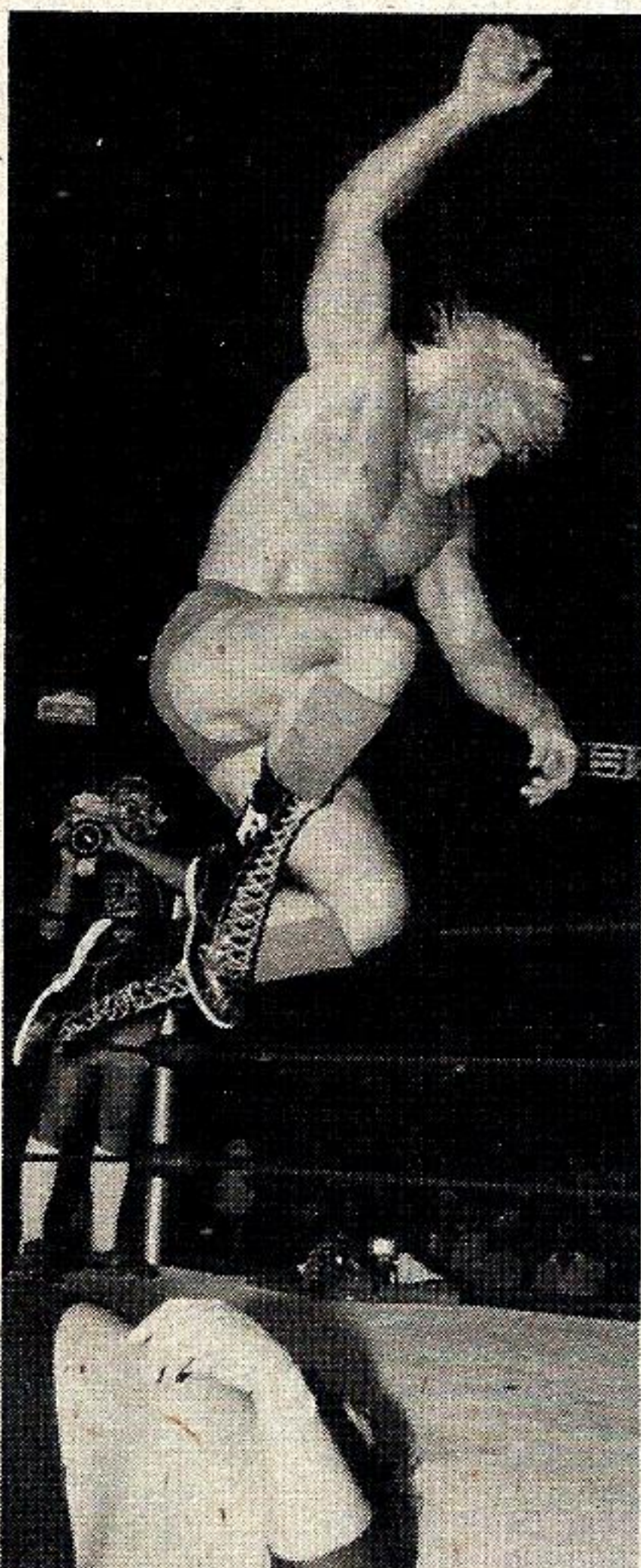
Bruno Sammartino is wrestling's "Living Legend." He held the WWF heavyweight crown on two occasions for an unsurpassed total of nearly 11 years. His first title reign began on May 17, 1963, when he defeated Buddy Rogers in 48 seconds for the belt using several drop-kicks, a bearhug, and a backbreaker. That reign lasted until Ivan Koloff won the belt on January 18, 1971. Bruno's second reign came when he defeated Stan Stasiak on December 10, 1973, to win the belt; that reign came to an end on April 30, 1977, when Bruno was beaten by Superstar Graham. Bruno retired in 1981, but he returned to the ring in 1985 for a brief series of tag team matches with his son David. Bruno currently provides commentary for several WWF television broadcasts.



Bruno Sammartino, one of the most powerful men in the history of professional athletics, battles one of his '60s rivals, Waldo Von Erich.

2 RIC FLAIR

"Nature Boy" Ric Flair is currently in the midst of his third NWA World title reign. Except for two brief periods of time totaling about six months, Flair has worn the 10 pounds of gold continuously since September 17, 1981, when he defeated Dusty Rhodes in Kansas City, Missouri, for the title. His second title reign came to an end due to Harley Race, and it was from Race that Flair regained the belt. His most recent title reign began when he defeated Kerry Von Erich on May 24, 1984, in Yokosuka City, Japan, cutting short Kerry's title reign at the 18-day mark. Flair's excellence in the ring has made him perhaps the most respected wrestler of the 1980s—and his boastful claim that he sets the pace for the rest of the wrestling world is in fact very tough to criticize.

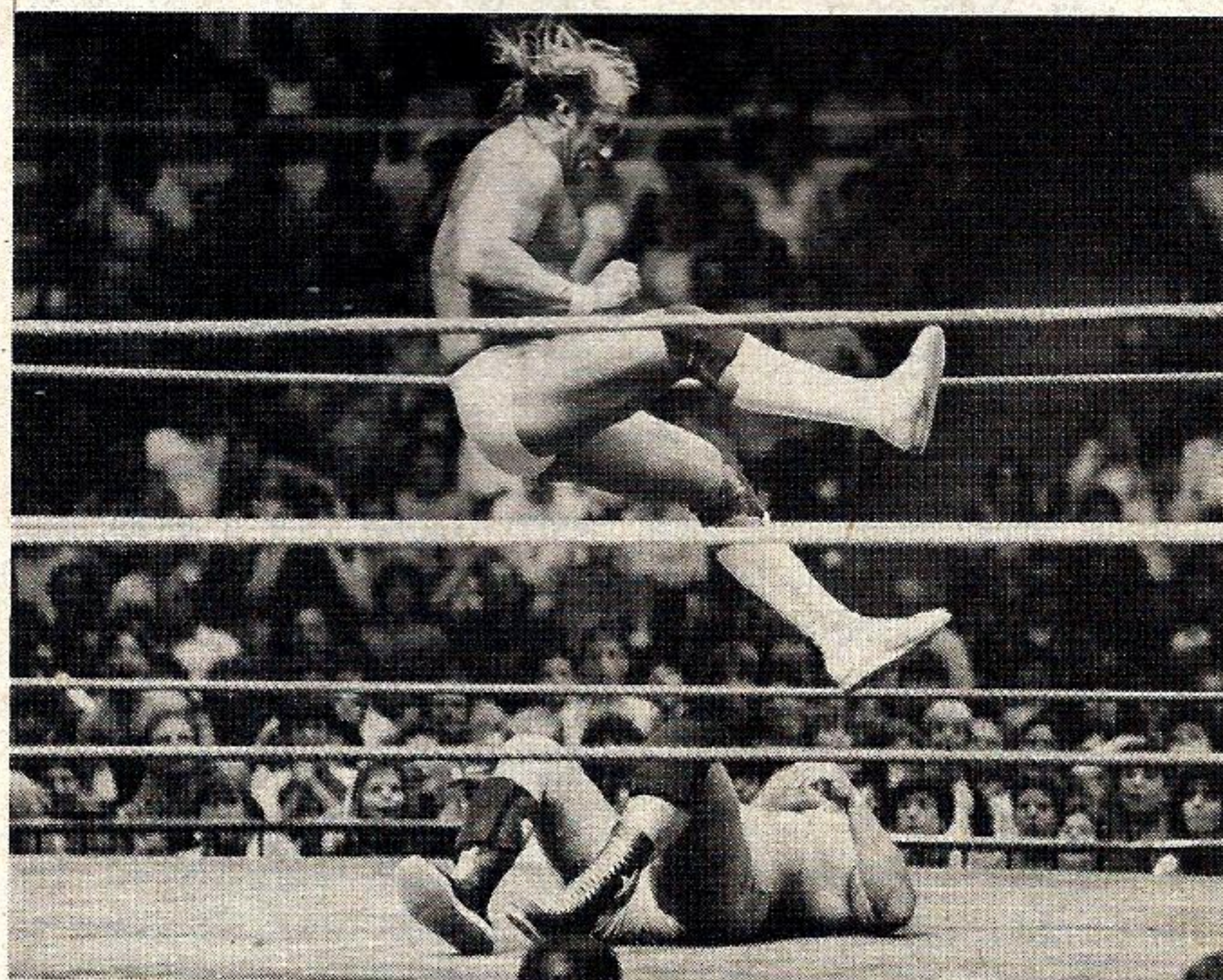


Ric Flair has become the dominant force in the NWA during the 1980s. The current NWA champion unleashes a vicious kneedrop against Wahoo McDaniel.

3 HULK HOGAN

Hulk Hogan captured the WWF World heavyweight title from The Iron Sheik on January 23, 1984, in New York's Madison Square Garden—and professional wrestling hasn't been the same since! The Hulkster is unquestionably

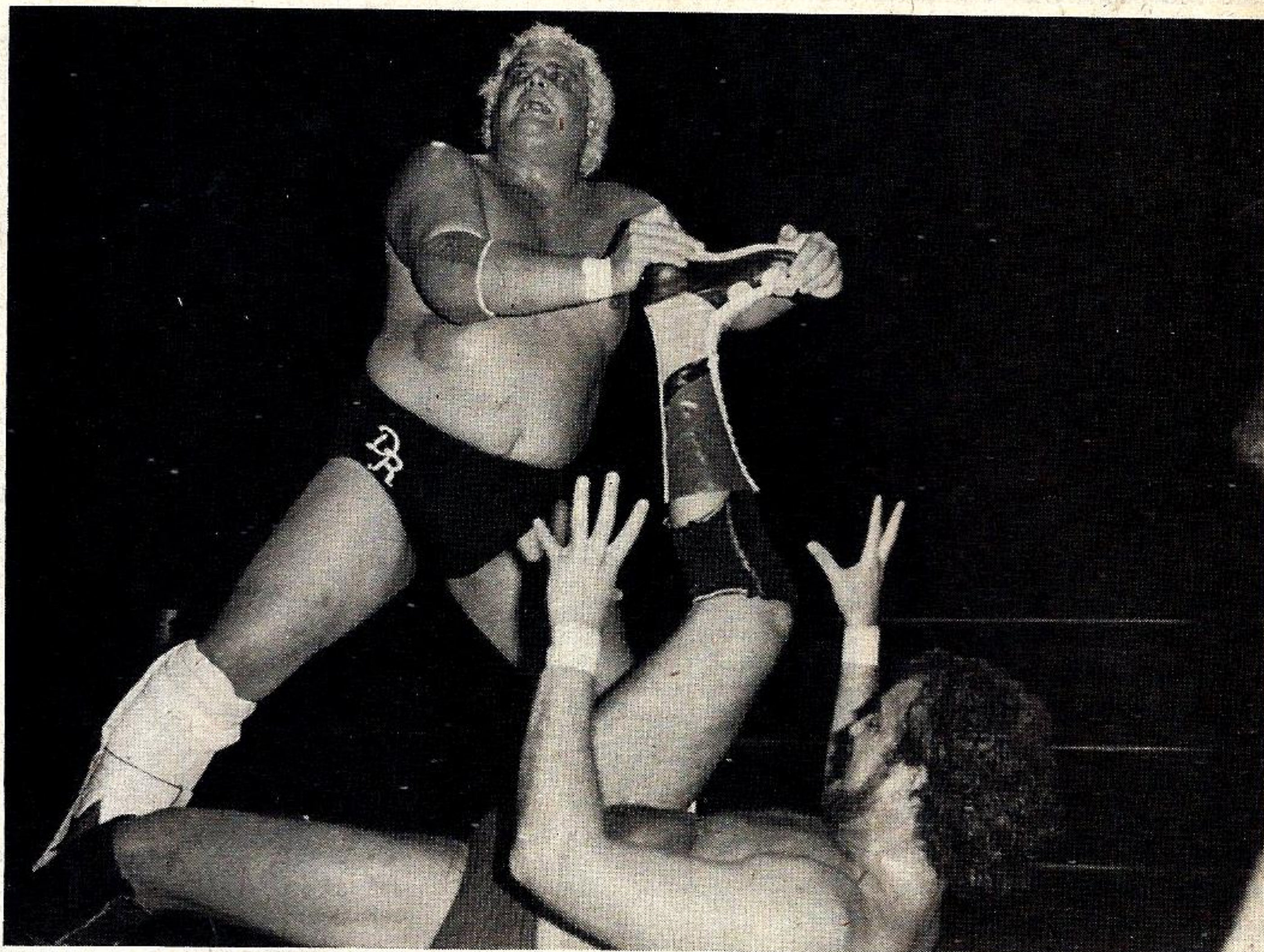
one of the most popular athletes in the entire world, and has in fact transcended wrestling to become a legitimate media star in his own right. When the general public starts talking about wrestling, it is Hulk Hogan's name that is first on their lips.



Hulk Hogan, the most recognizable wrestler in the world, executes a legdrop against Cowboy Bob Orton.

4 DUSTY RHODES

"The American Dream" Dusty Rhodes has held the NWA World title on two occasions, beating Harley Race both times for the coveted belt. His first title victory came in Tampa, Florida, on August 21, 1979, while his second NWA championship reign began in Atlanta nearly three years later, on June 21, 1981. Dusty's patriotism is unquestioned; he is a tireless proponent of American ideals. In addition to two NWA World titles, Dusty's lengthy and impressive list of championship credits includes the NWA World tag team title, the U.S. tag team championship, the Mid-Atlantic and Georgia heavyweight titles, and literally dozens of regional singles titles and tag team championships.

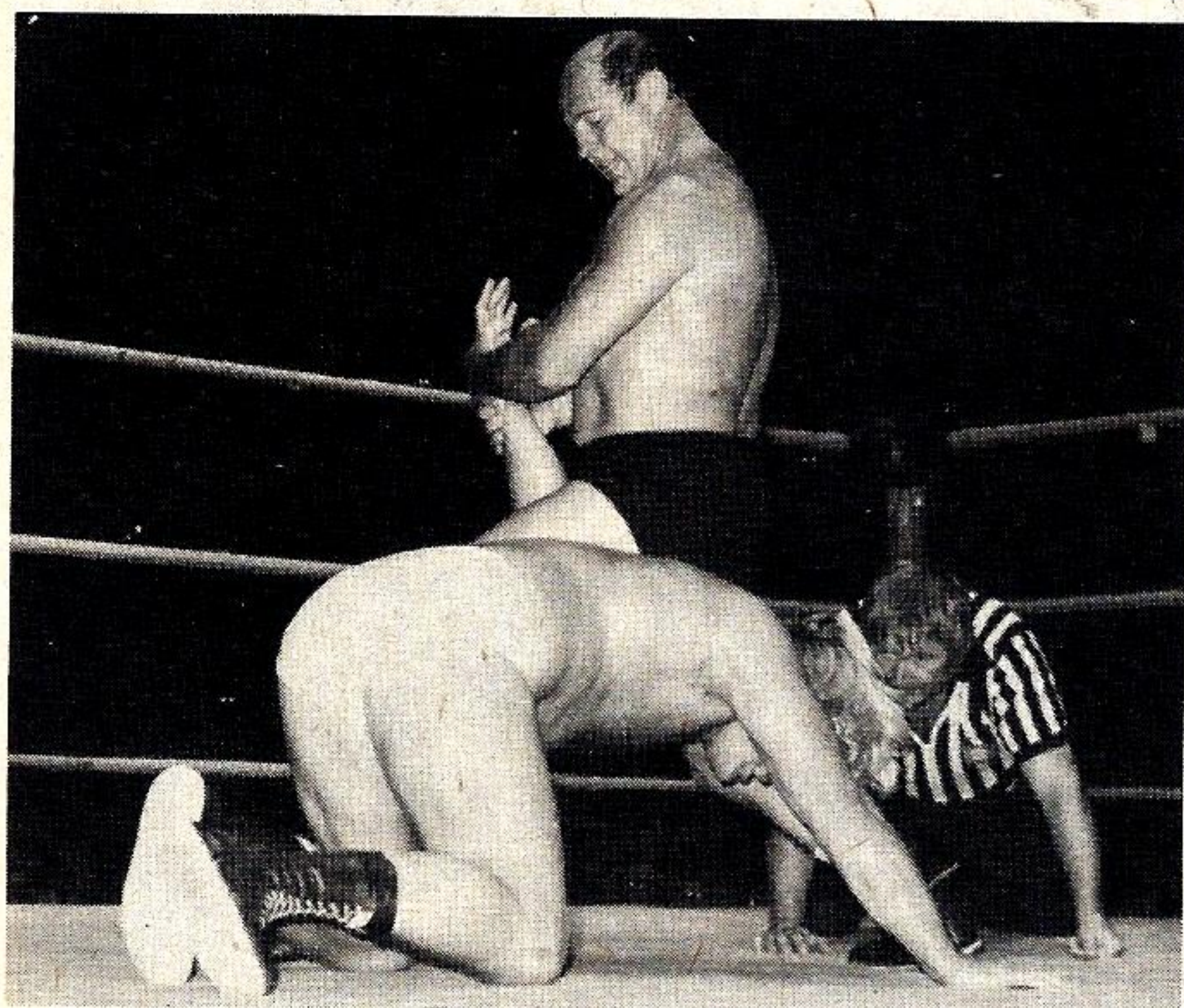


Dusty Rhodes' personal crusade against the sport's rulebreakers has taken him all over the world. He has been among the most popular men in the sport for over a decade.

5 VERNE GAGNE

No other man alive has captured a world wrestling title on more occasions

of more than seven years that lasted from August 31, 1968, through to November 8, 1975. When the history



Nine-time AWA World champion Verne Gagne was a wrestling technician. He knew how to get the most out of every move and maneuver, while using up the least amount of energy.

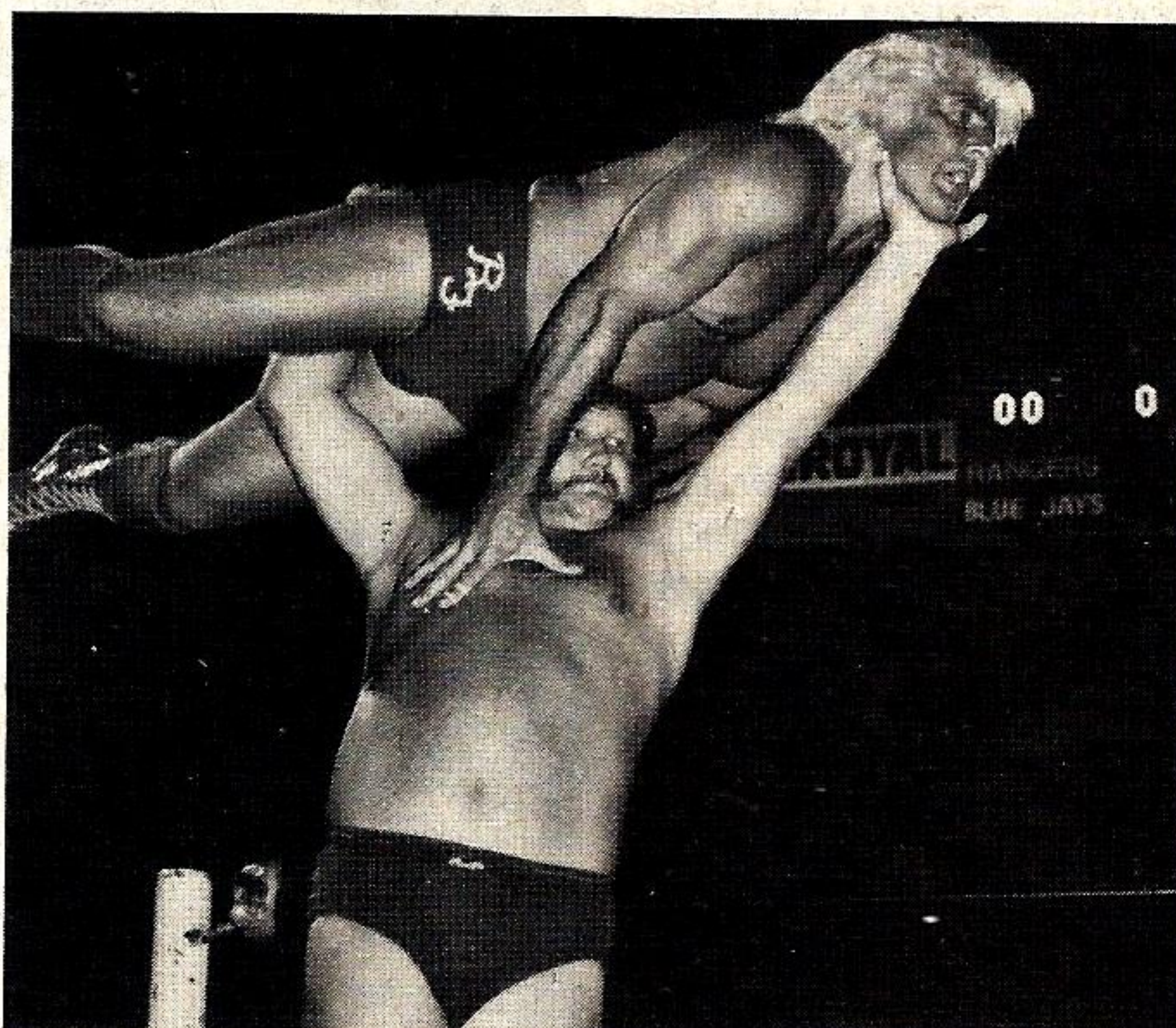
than Verne Gagne. Between August 16, 1960, and May 19, 1981, Gagne reheld the AWA World heavyweight championship nine times, including one reign

of professional wrestling is written, Verne Gagne and the AWA will, in many respects, be considered by the sport's analysts as one and the same.

6 HARLEY RACE

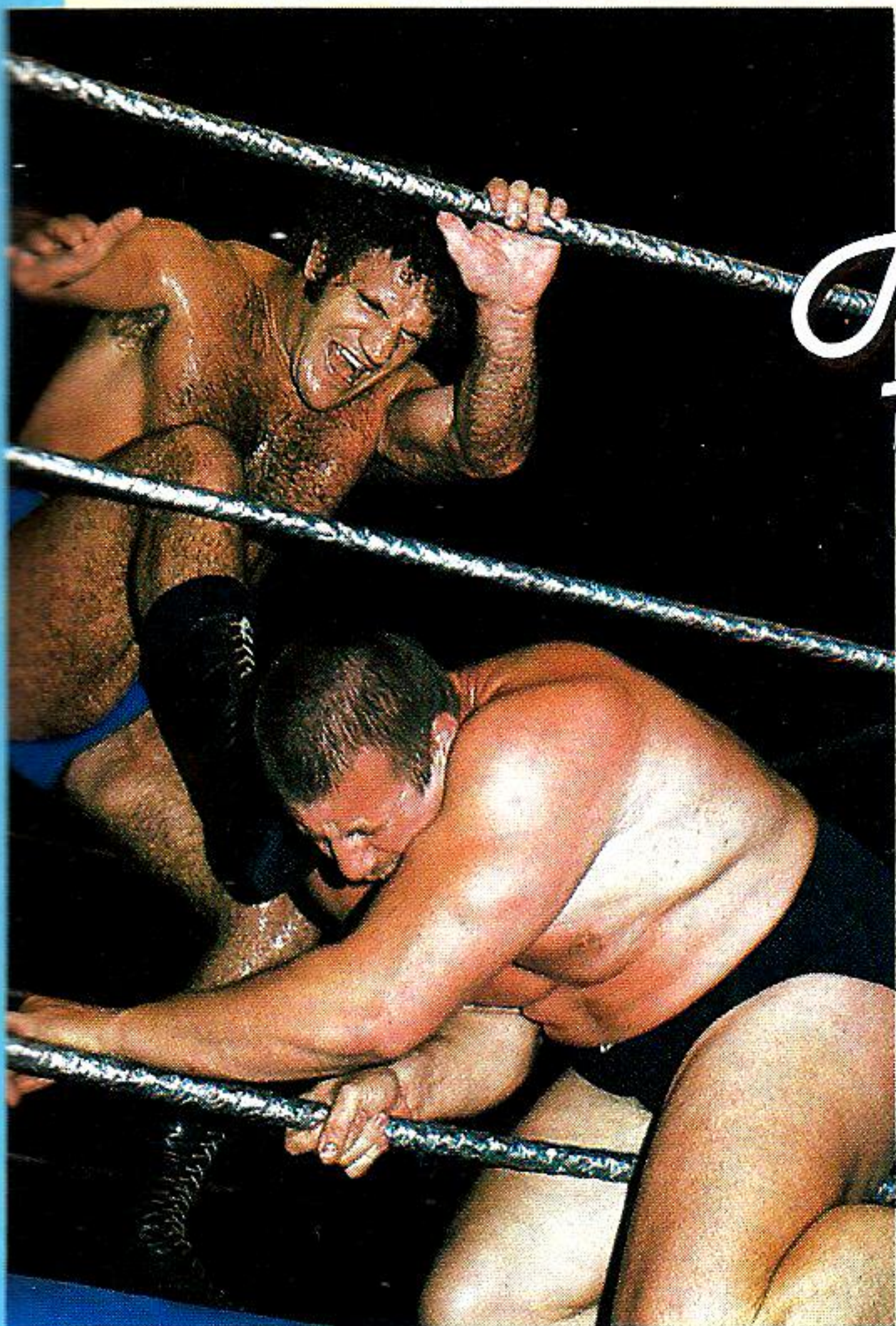
Harley Race had to battle long and hard to do it, but on June 10, 1983, he finally defeated Ric Flair to become the only man ever to win the NWA World title on seven occasions. Race surpassed the record of the great Lou Thesz, who had

worn the prestigious belt six times. Race's first NWA title reign began when he pinned Dory Funk Jr. in Kansas City, Kansas, on May 24, 1973. He has also defeated such formidable opponents as Terry Funk, Dusty Rhodes, and Shohei Baba to capture the belt.

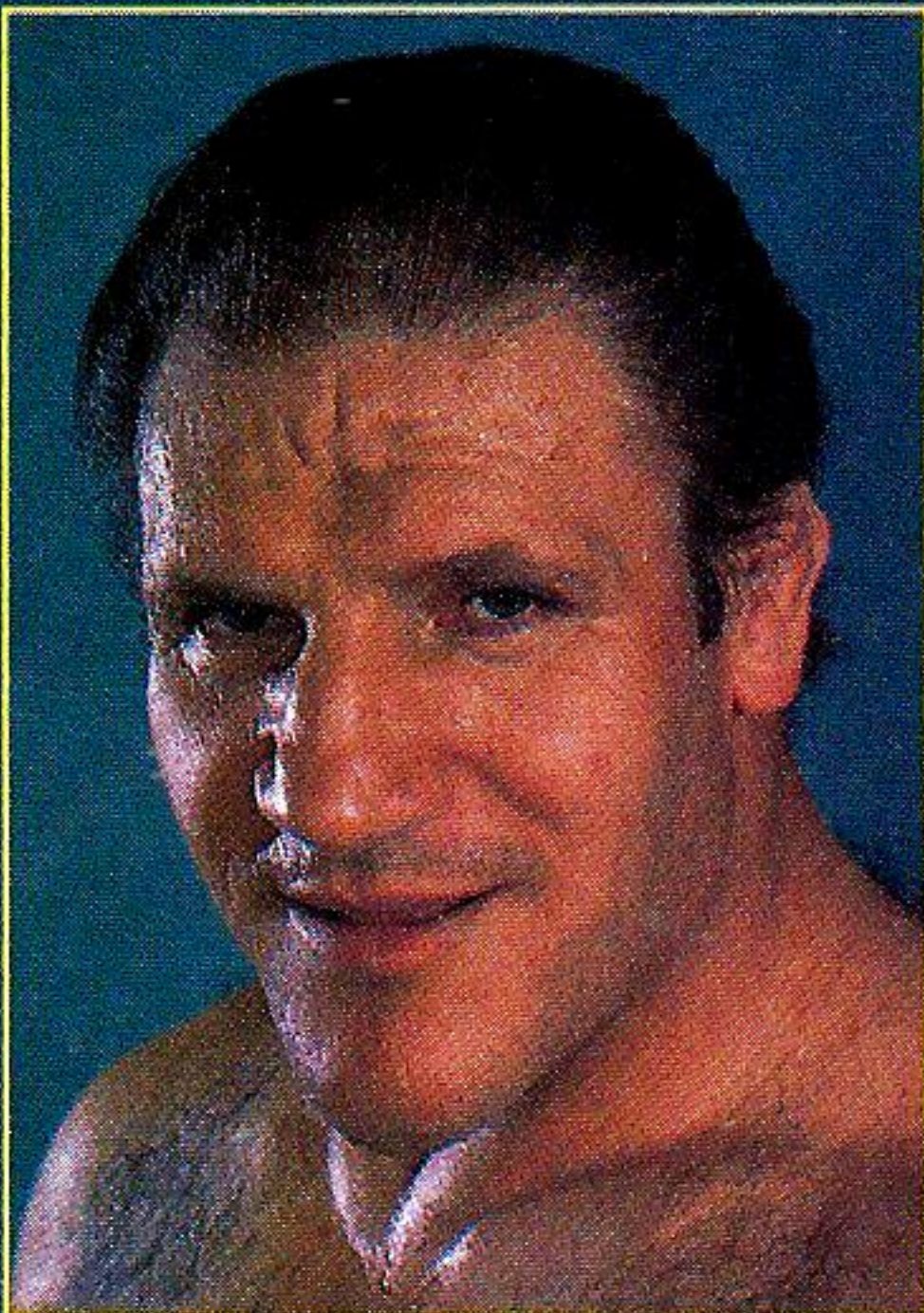


Though he does not possess a bodybuilder's physique, seven-time NWA World champion Harley Race (lifting Ric Flair above his head) is an extremely strong man.

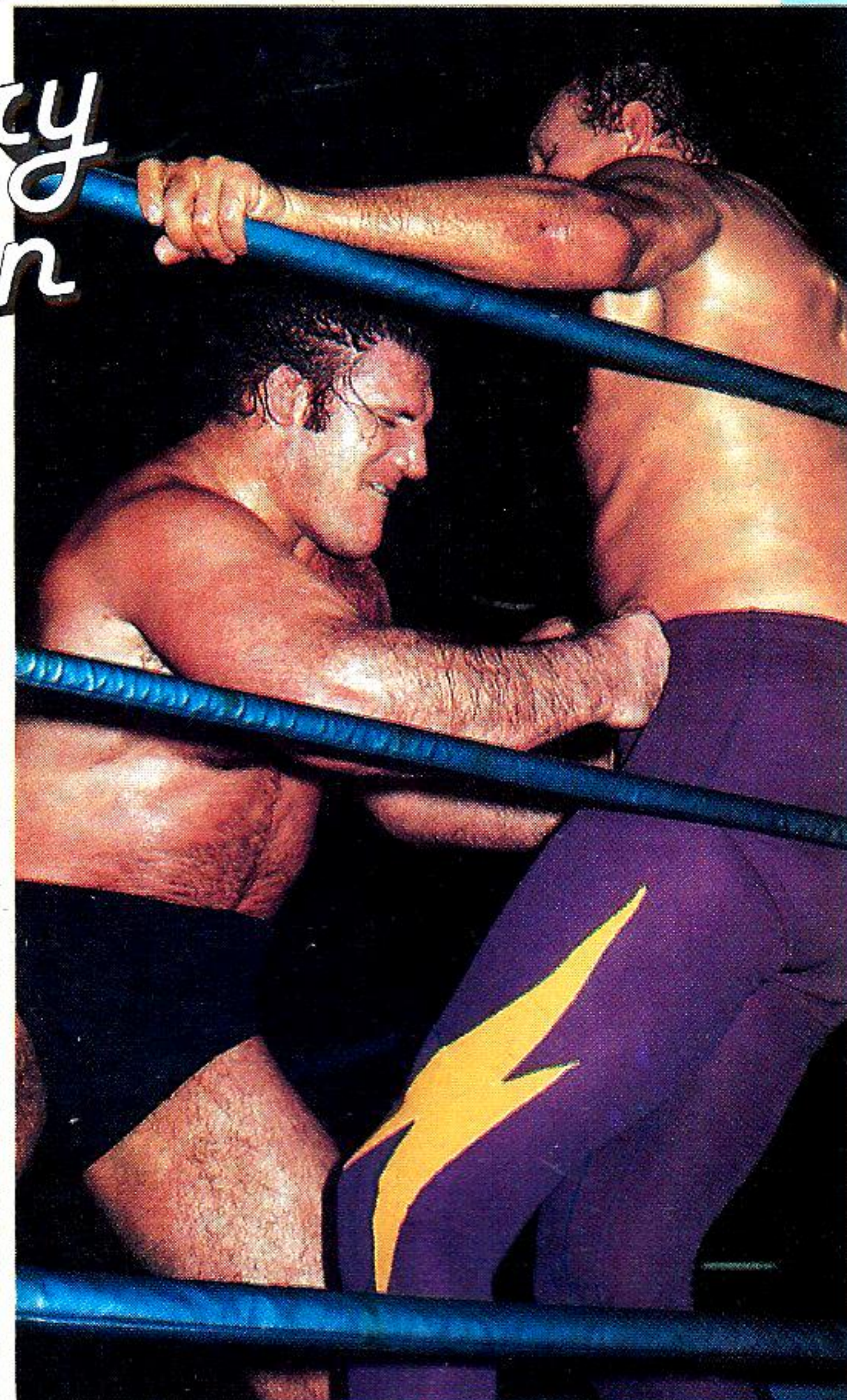
20th Anniversary Celebration



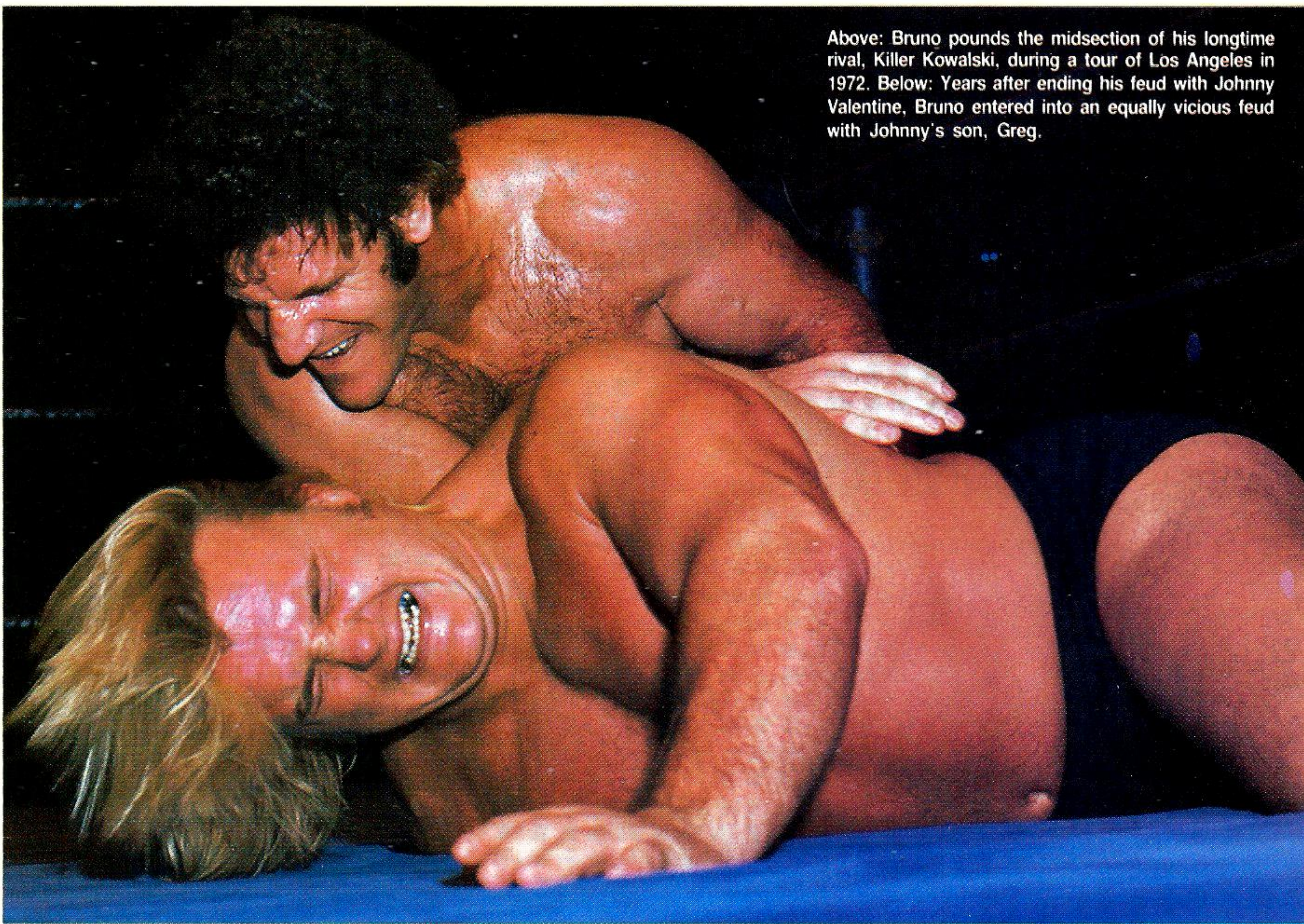
Above: Sammartino drives Nikolai Volkoff to his knees during their 1979 feud. Regardless of the size of his opponent, Bruno would rarely ever take a backward step in the ring.



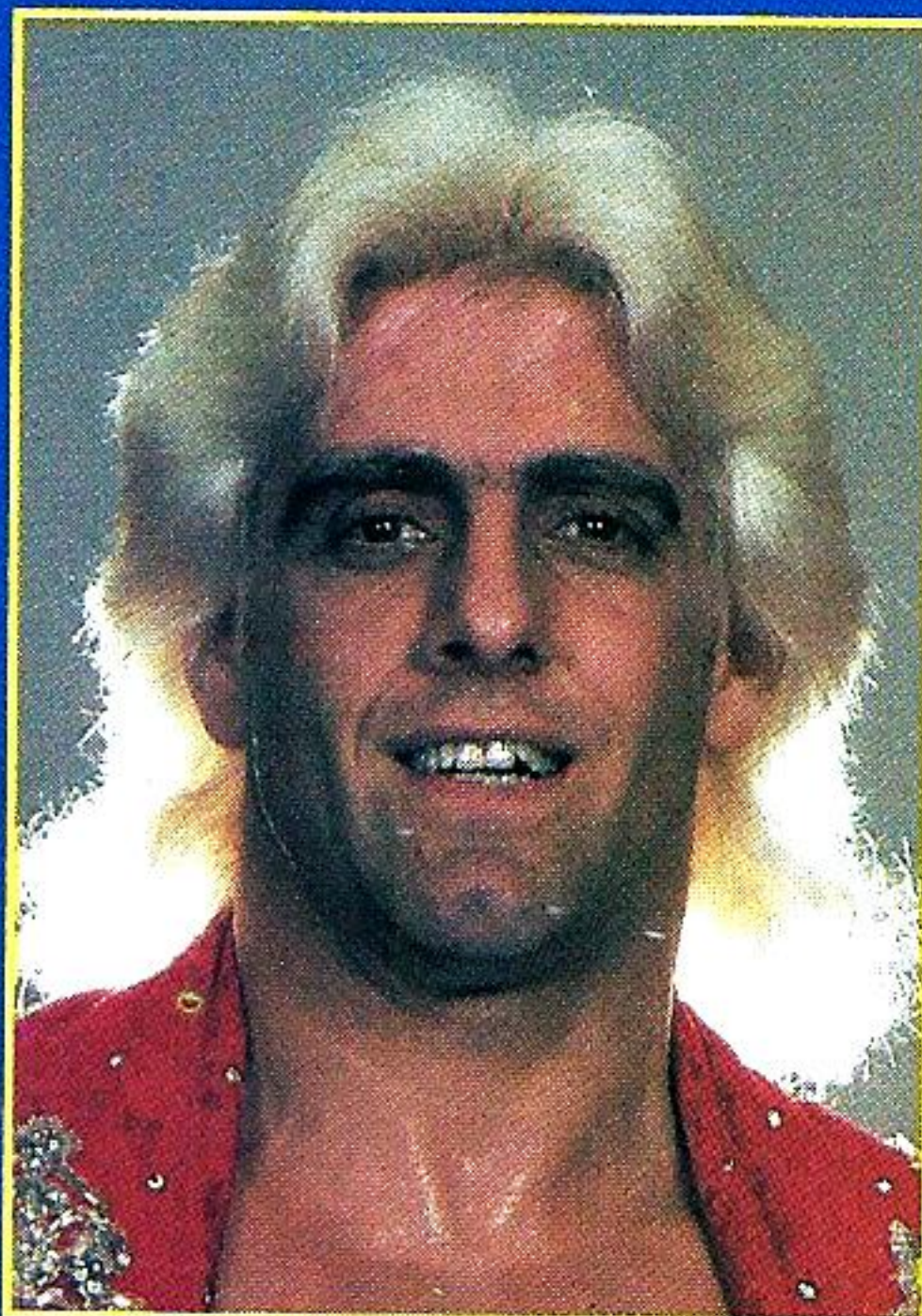
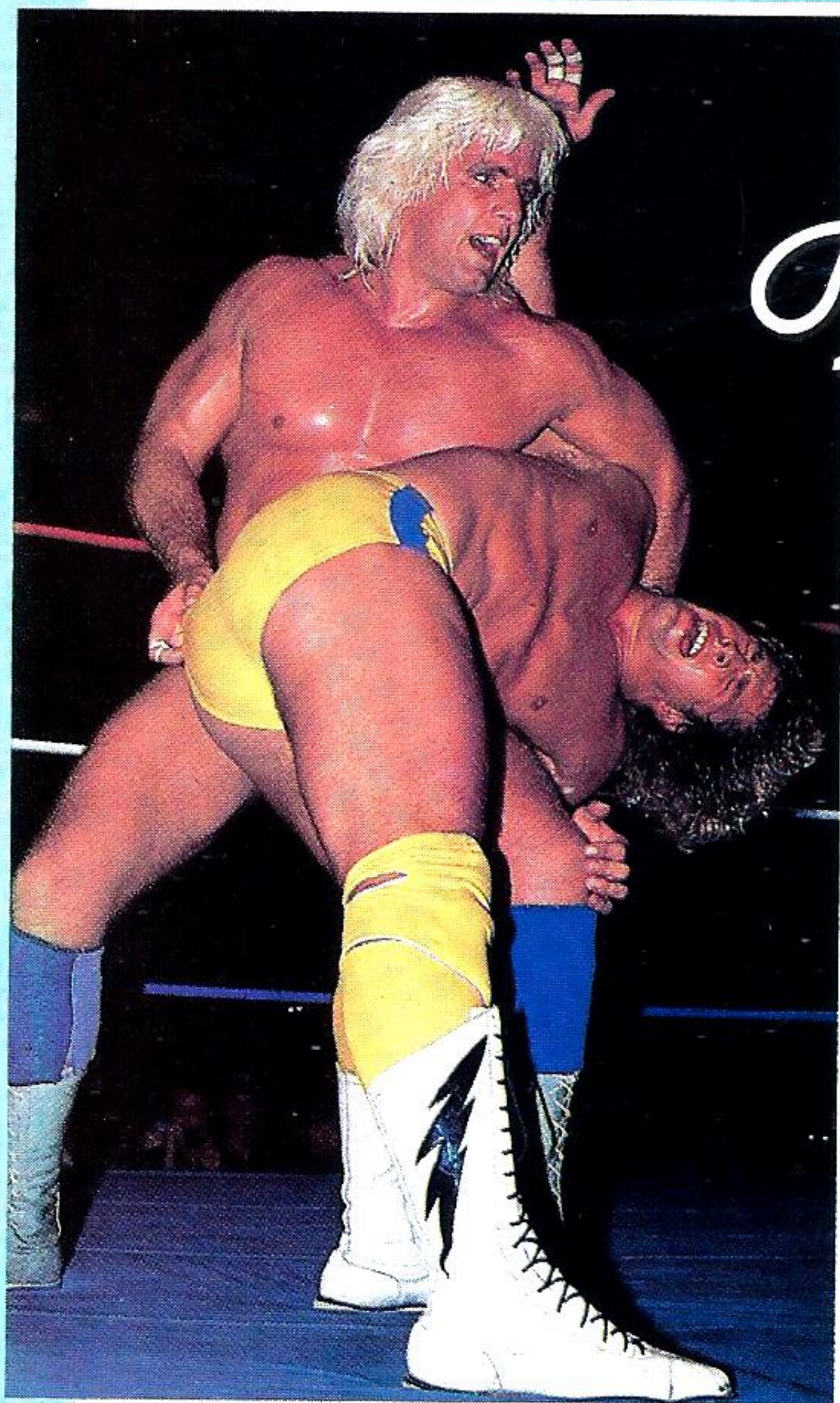
BRUNO SAMMARTINO



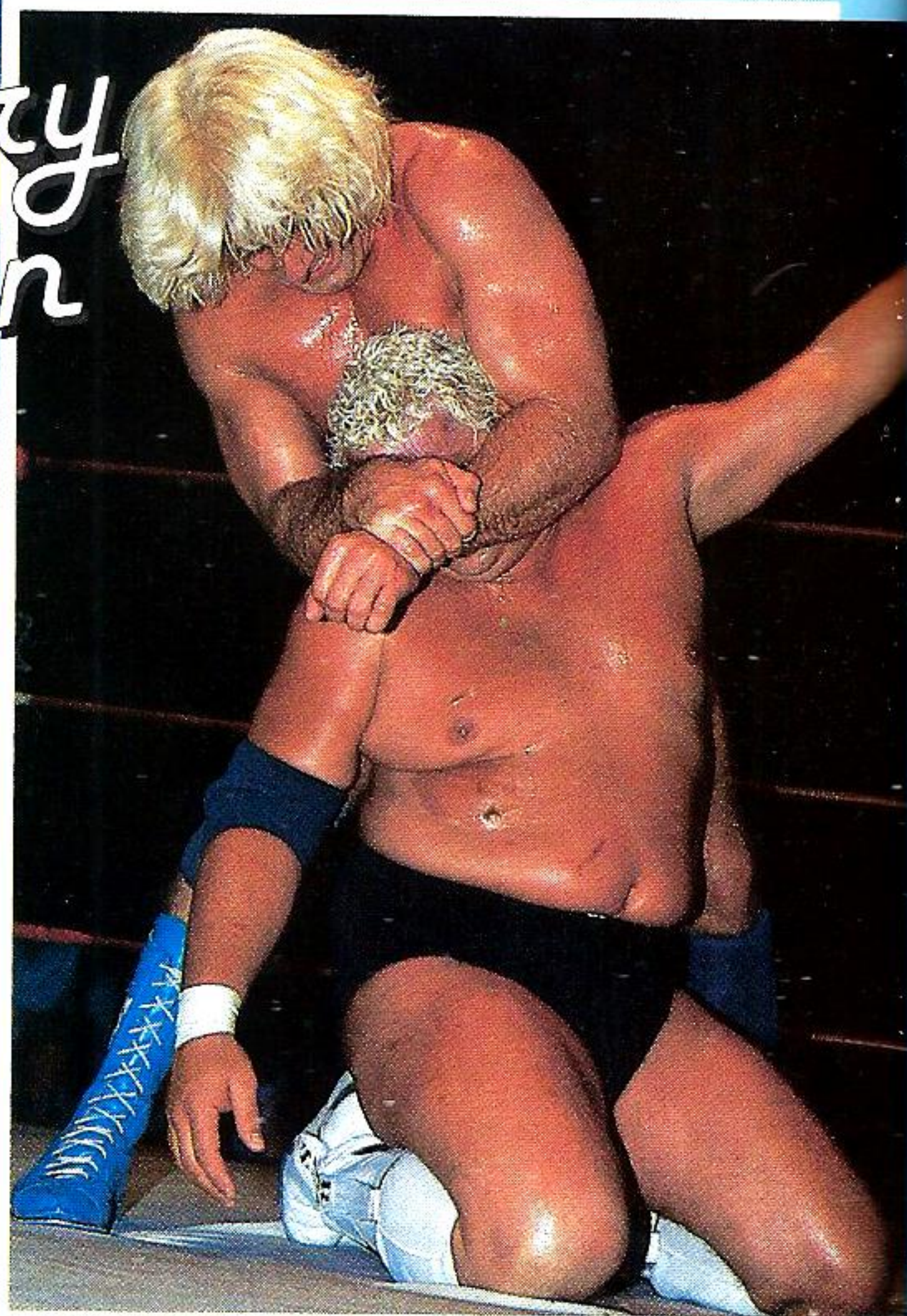
Above: Bruno pounds the midsection of his longtime rival, Killer Kowalski, during a tour of Los Angeles in 1972. Below: Years after ending his feud with Johnny Valentine, Bruno entered into an equally vicious feud with Johnny's son, Greg.



20th Anniversary Celebration



RIC FLAIR

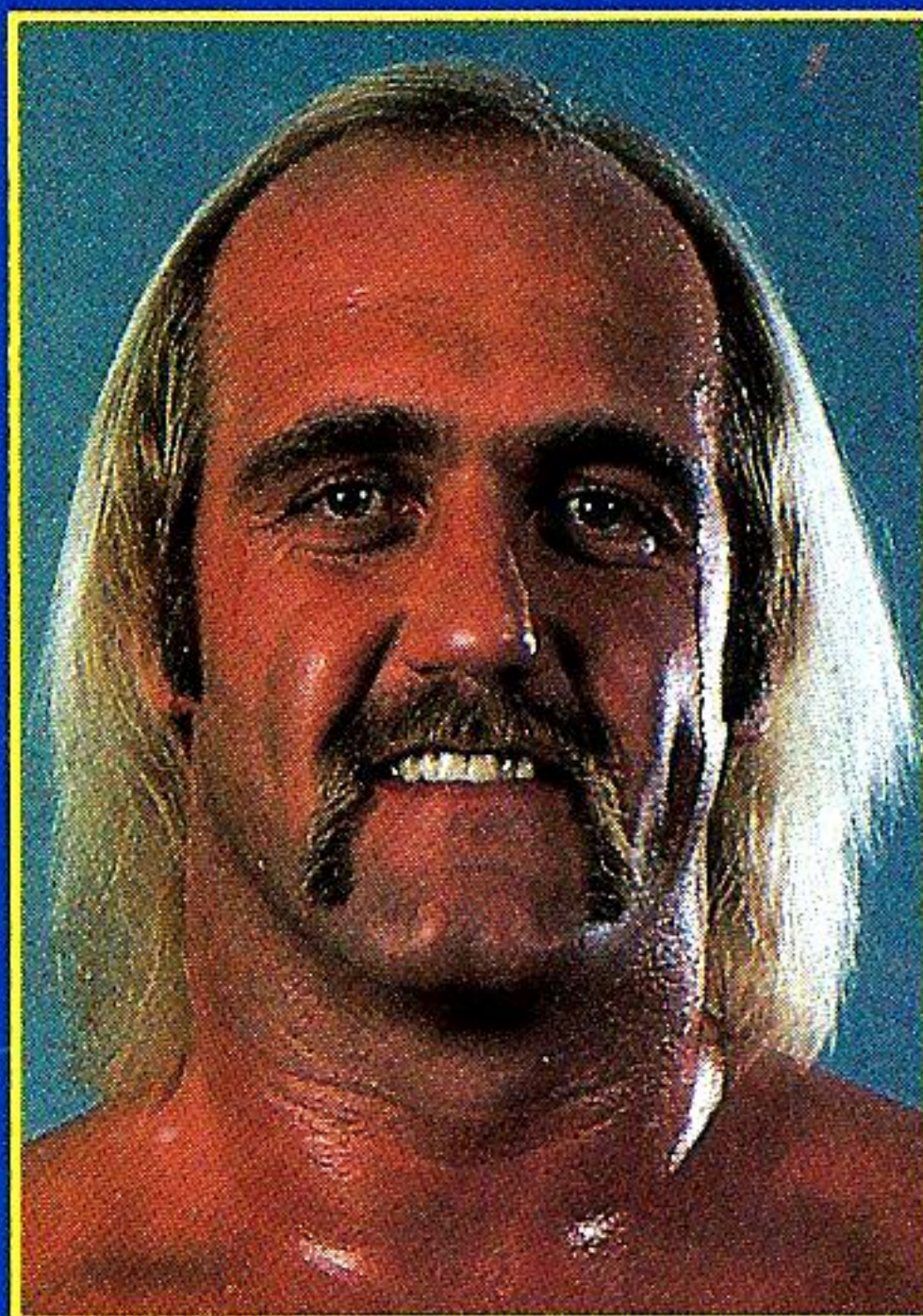
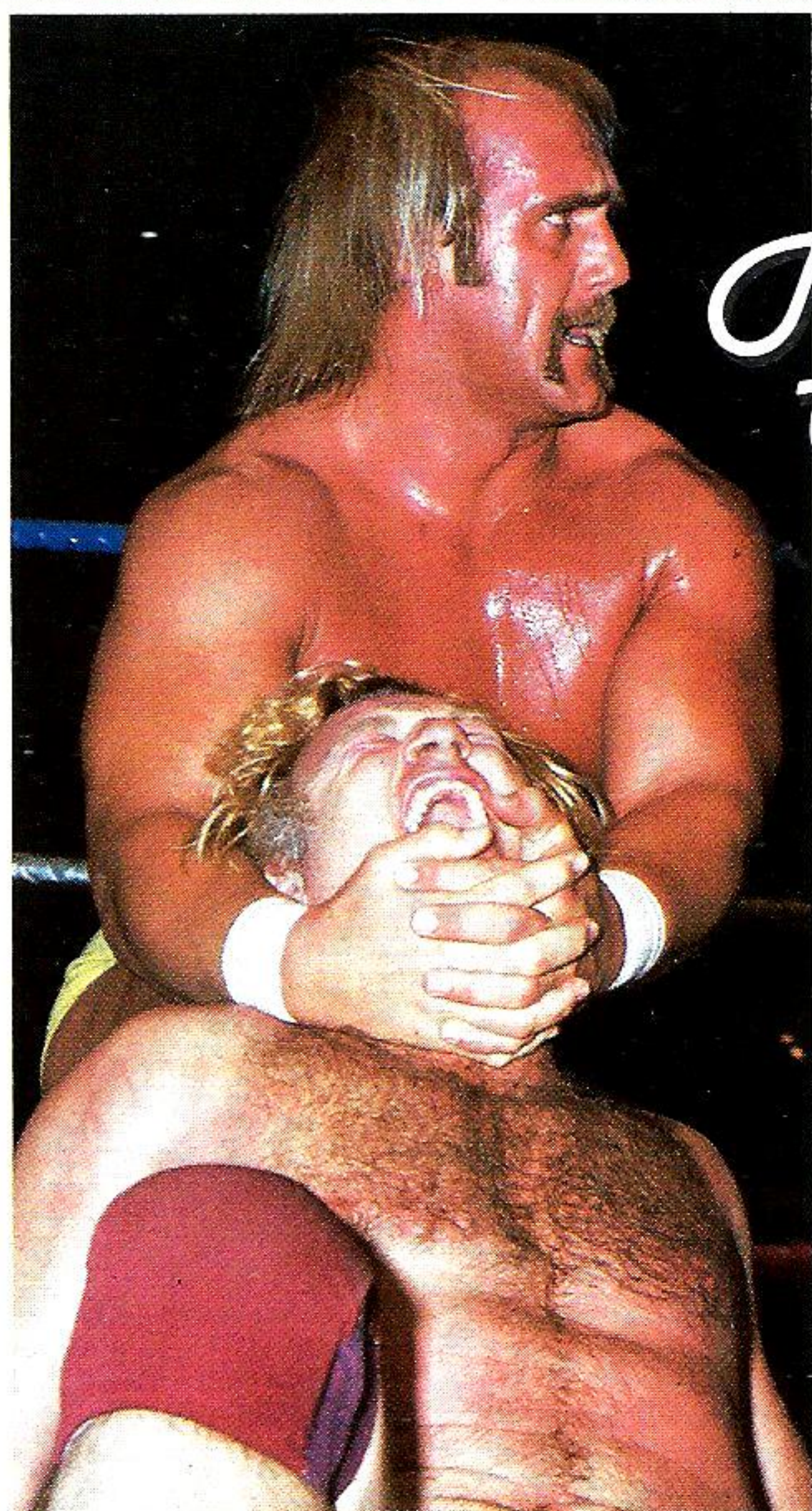


Dusty Rhodes, the man from whom Flair won his first of three NWA titles, tries to maneuver out of Ric's headlock. Flair has been the most dominant force in the NWA during the 1980s.

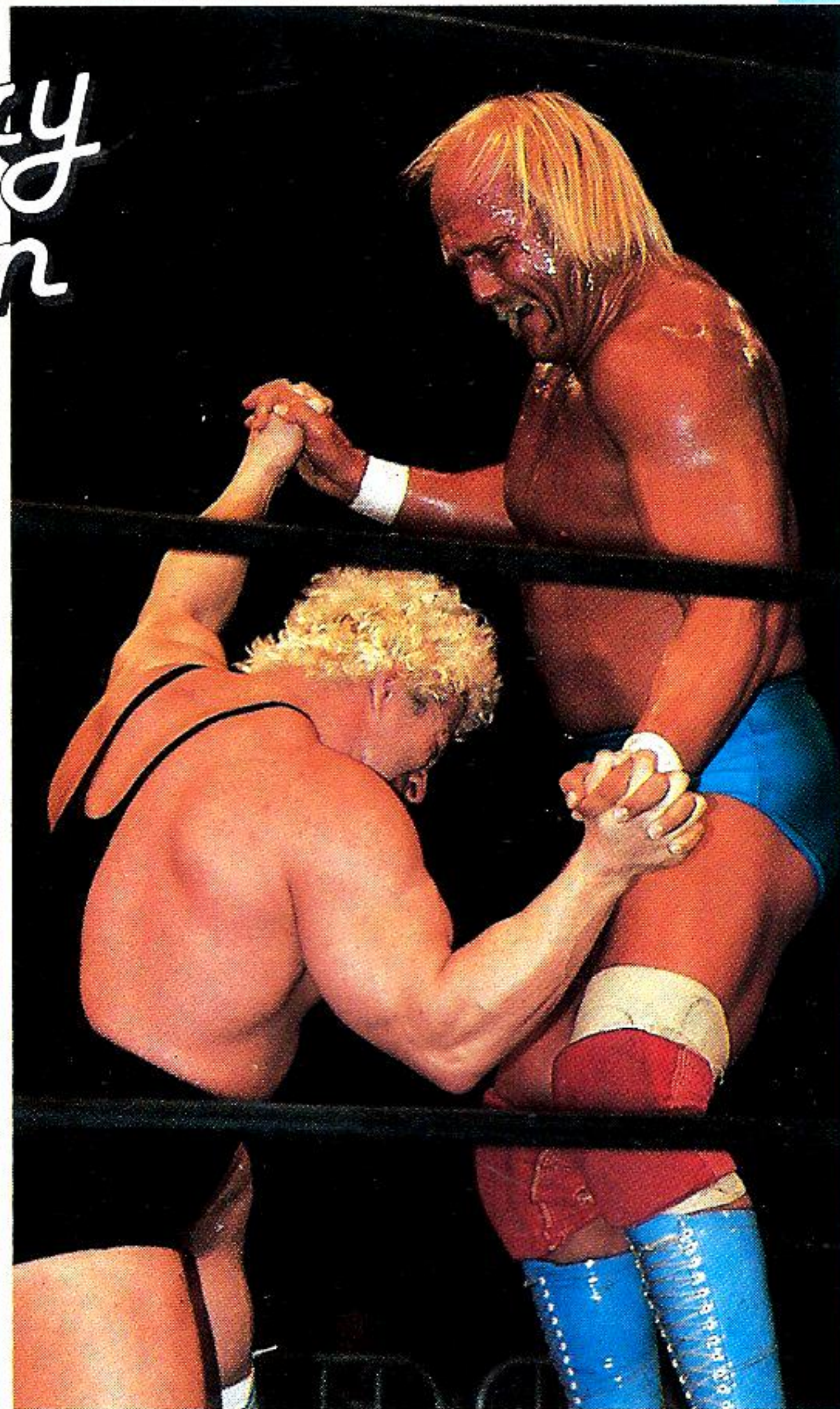
Above: Flair applies an abdominal stretch on Kerry Von Erich, a man to whom he lost and then regained his NWA title. Below: In 1979, Ric became embroiled in an unfortunate feud with his namesake and idol, "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers.



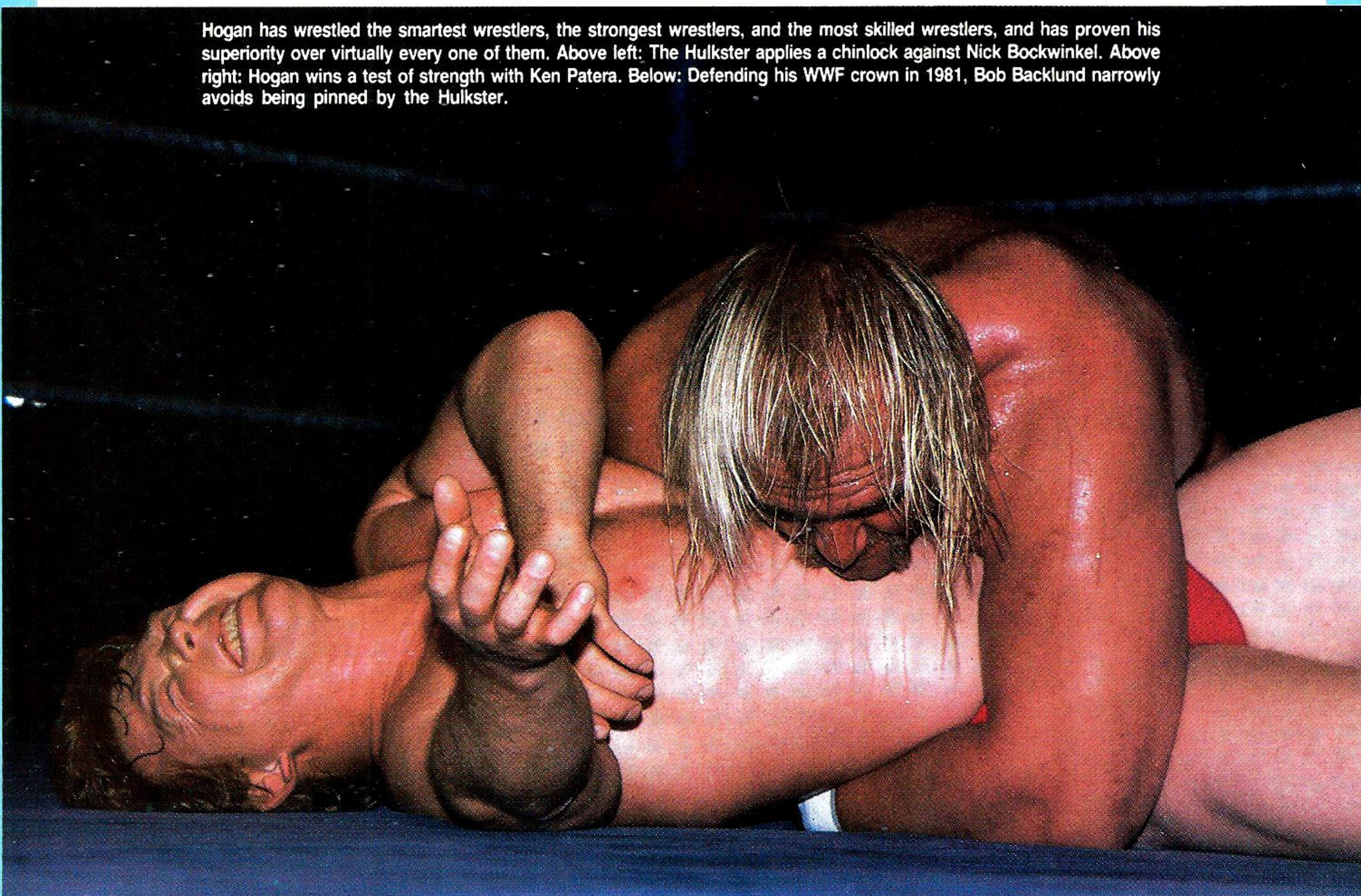
20th Anniversary Celebration



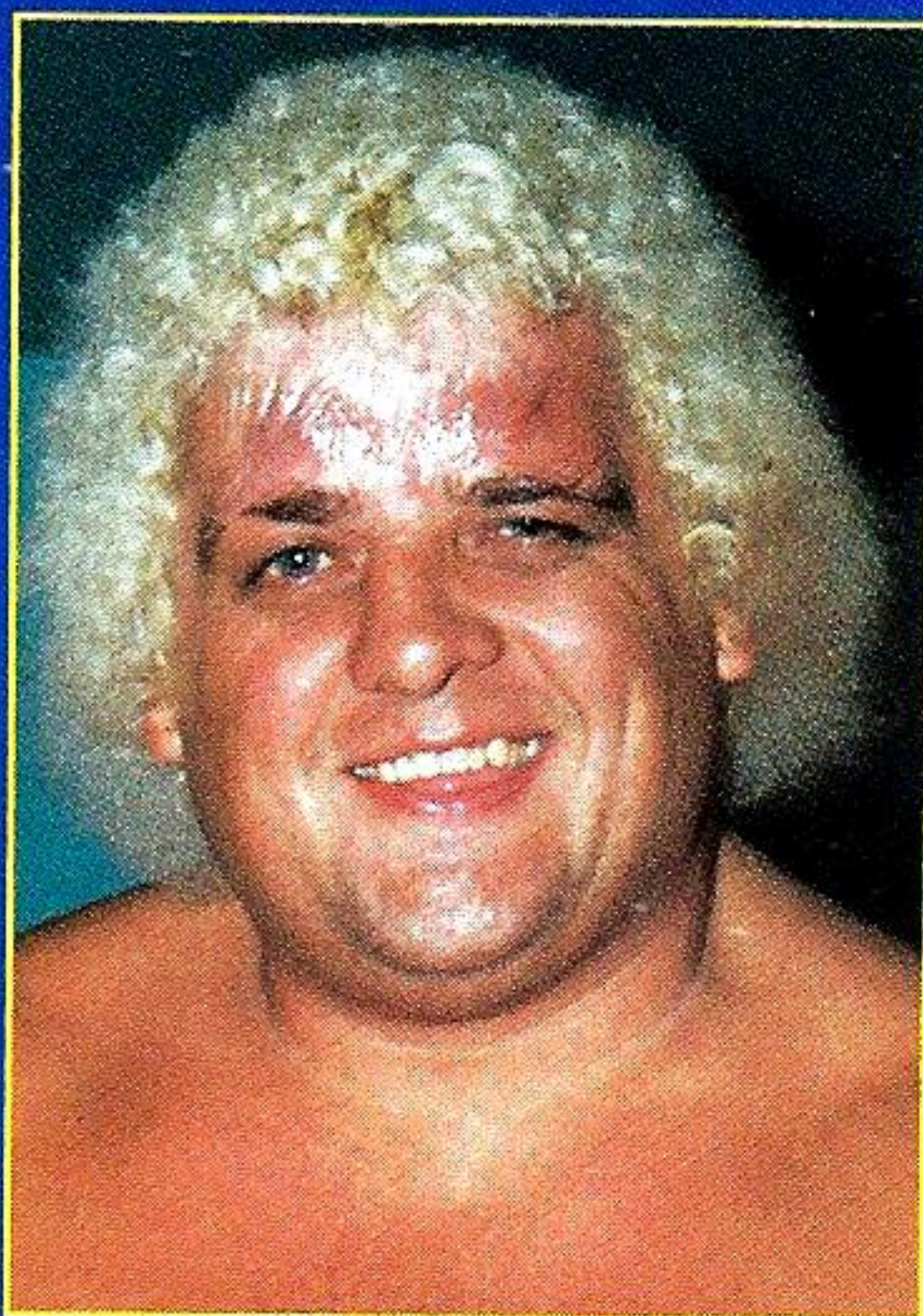
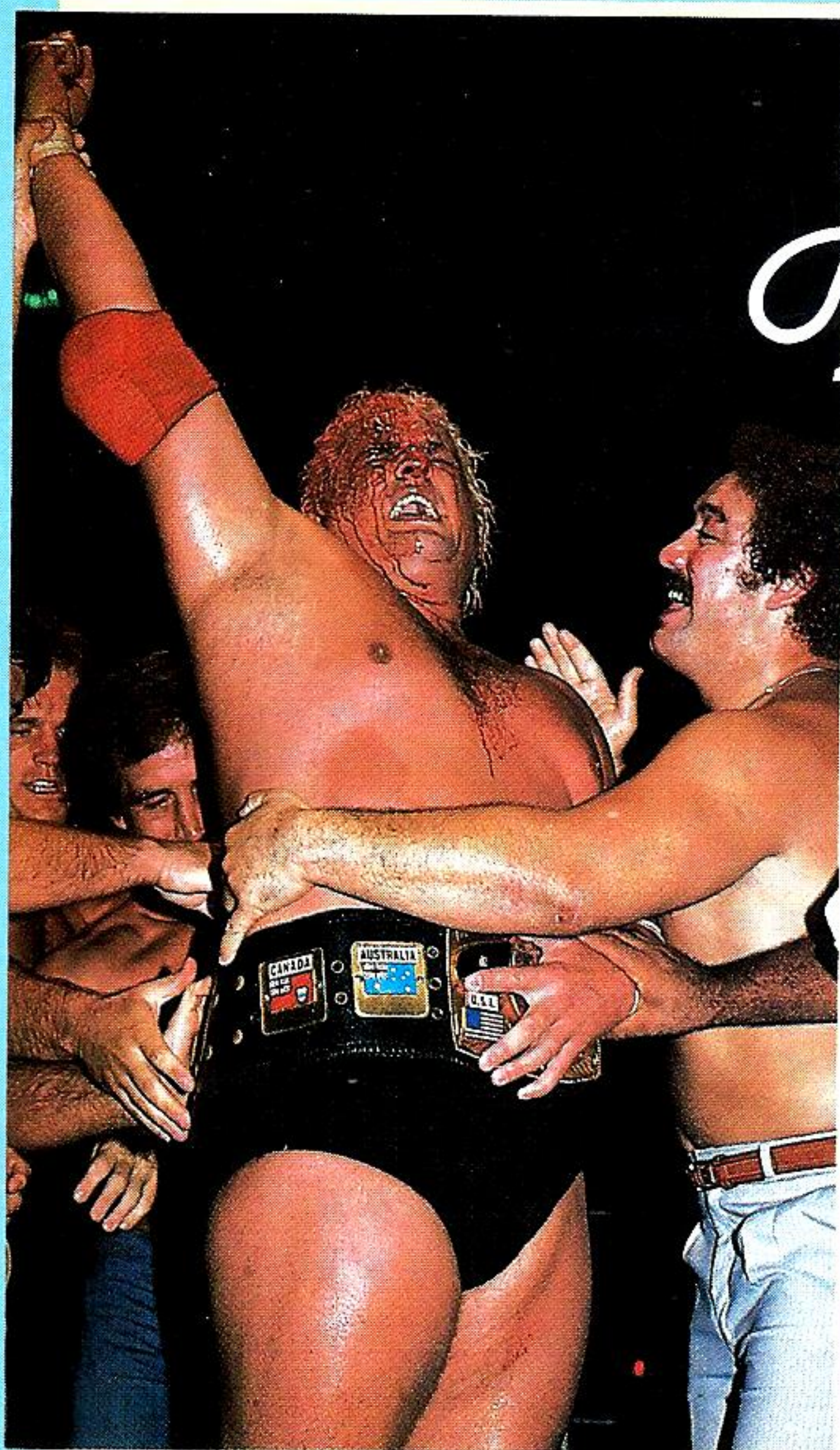
HULK HOGAN



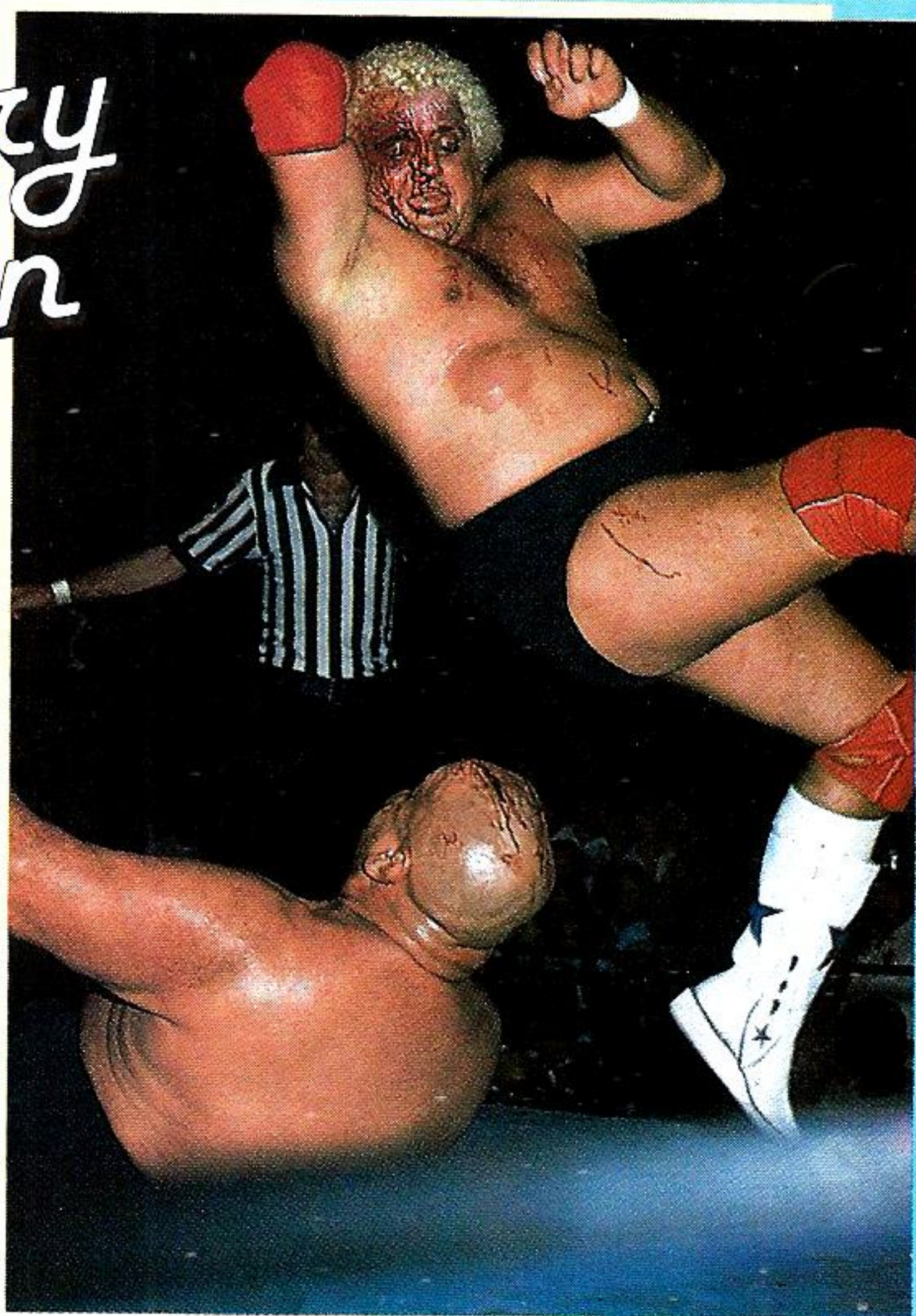
Hogan has wrestled the smartest wrestlers, the strongest wrestlers, and the most skilled wrestlers, and has proven his superiority over virtually every one of them. Above left: The Hulkster applies a chinlock against Nick Bockwinkel. Above right: Hogan wins a test of strength with Ken Patera. Below: Defending his WWF crown in 1981, Bob Backlund narrowly avoids being pinned by the Hulkster.



20th Anniversary Celebration

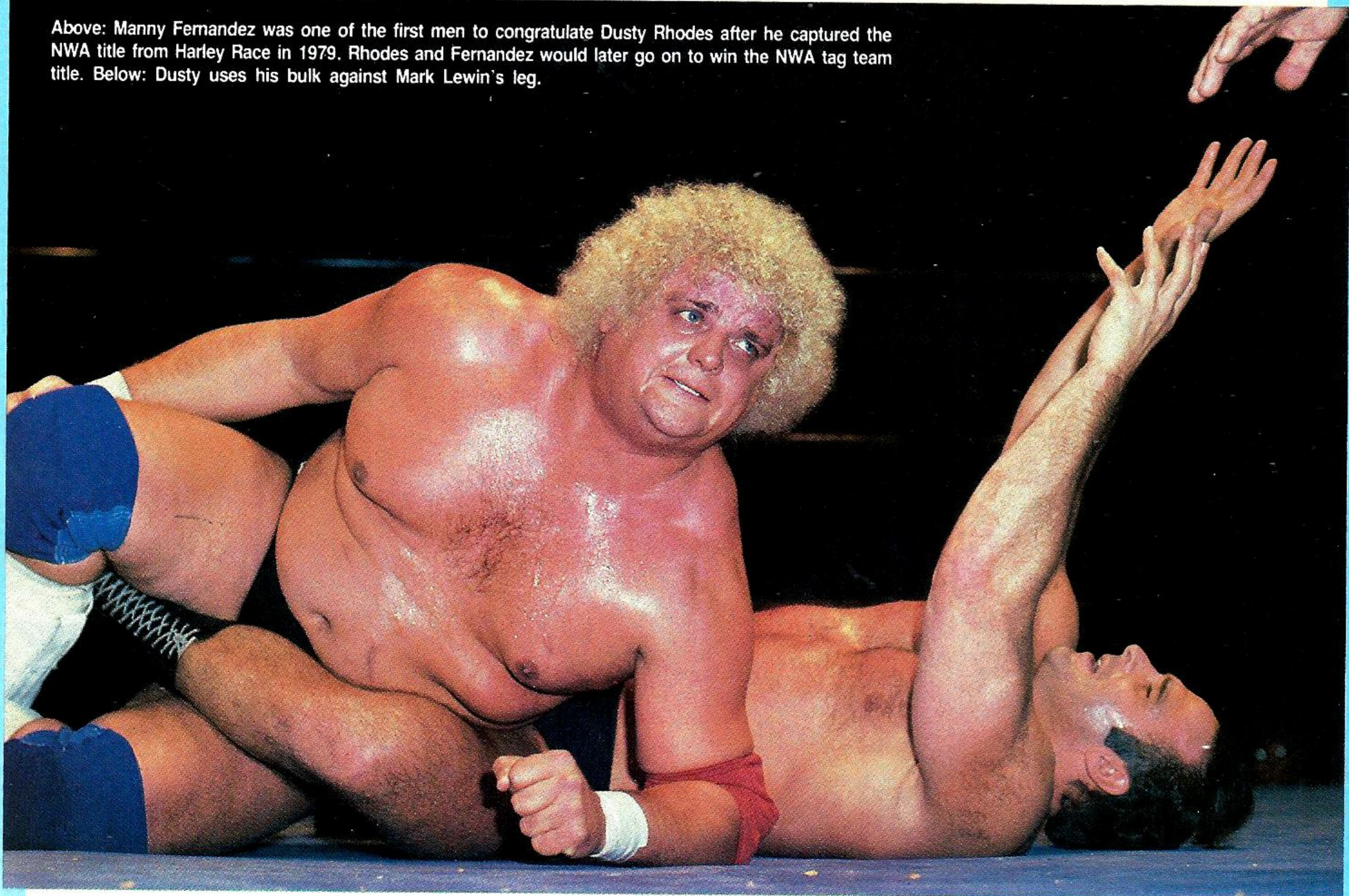


DUSTY RHODES



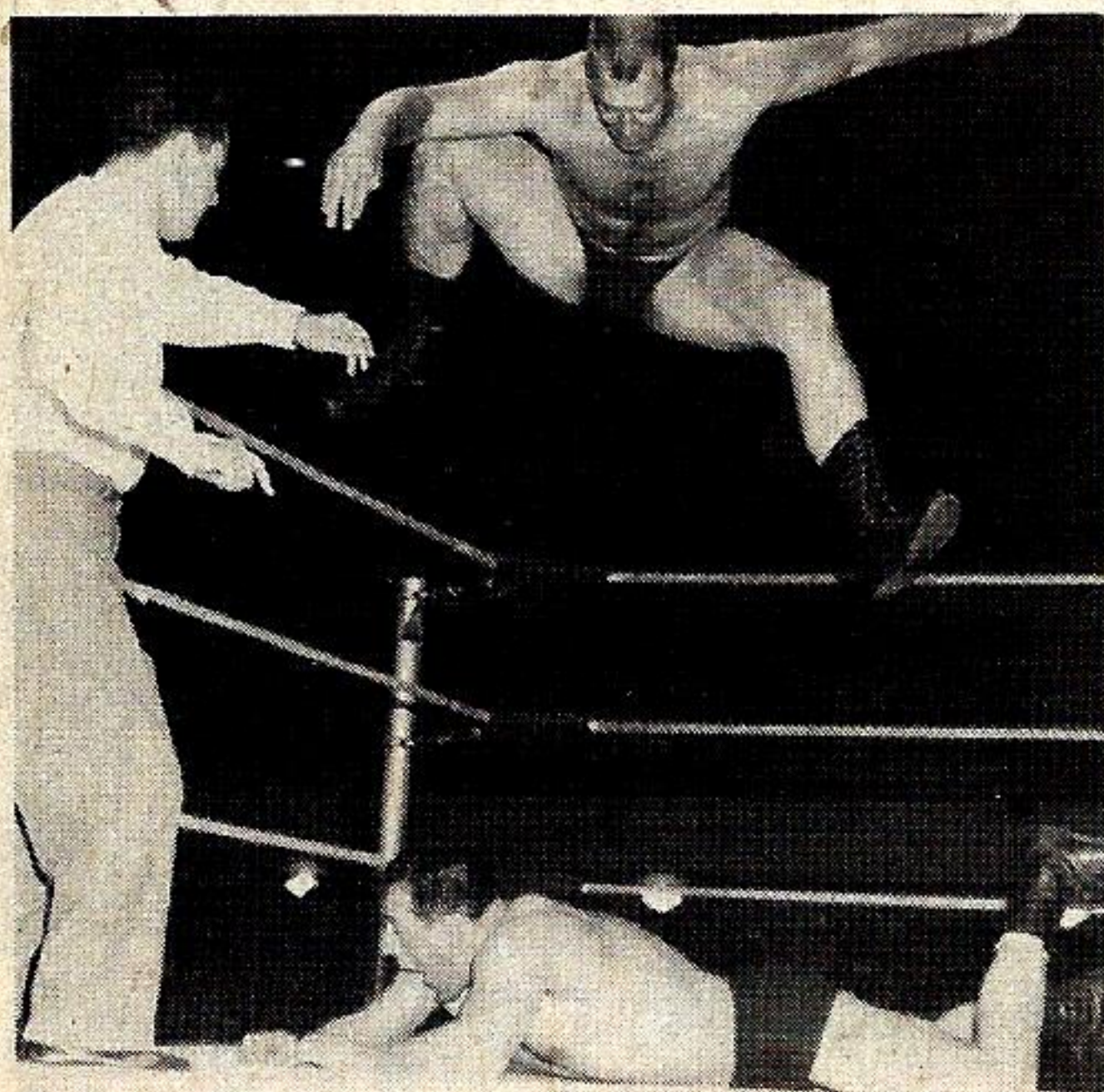
Rhodes delivers what may be the most effective elbowsmash in the sport's history, against King Curtis. As well-known as Dusty is for his elbowsmash, he is equally well-known for being susceptible to cuts.

Above: Manny Fernandez was one of the first men to congratulate Dusty Rhodes after he captured the NWA title from Harley Race in 1979. Rhodes and Fernandez would later go on to win the NWA tag team title. Below: Dusty uses his bulk against Mark Lewin's leg.



TOP 10 RESULTS

(Continued from page 34)



Fritz Von Erich pounces on the back of a helpless Bobby Brown. Fritz had absolutely no regard for what permanent effects his brutality would have on an opponent.

7 FRITZ VON ERICH

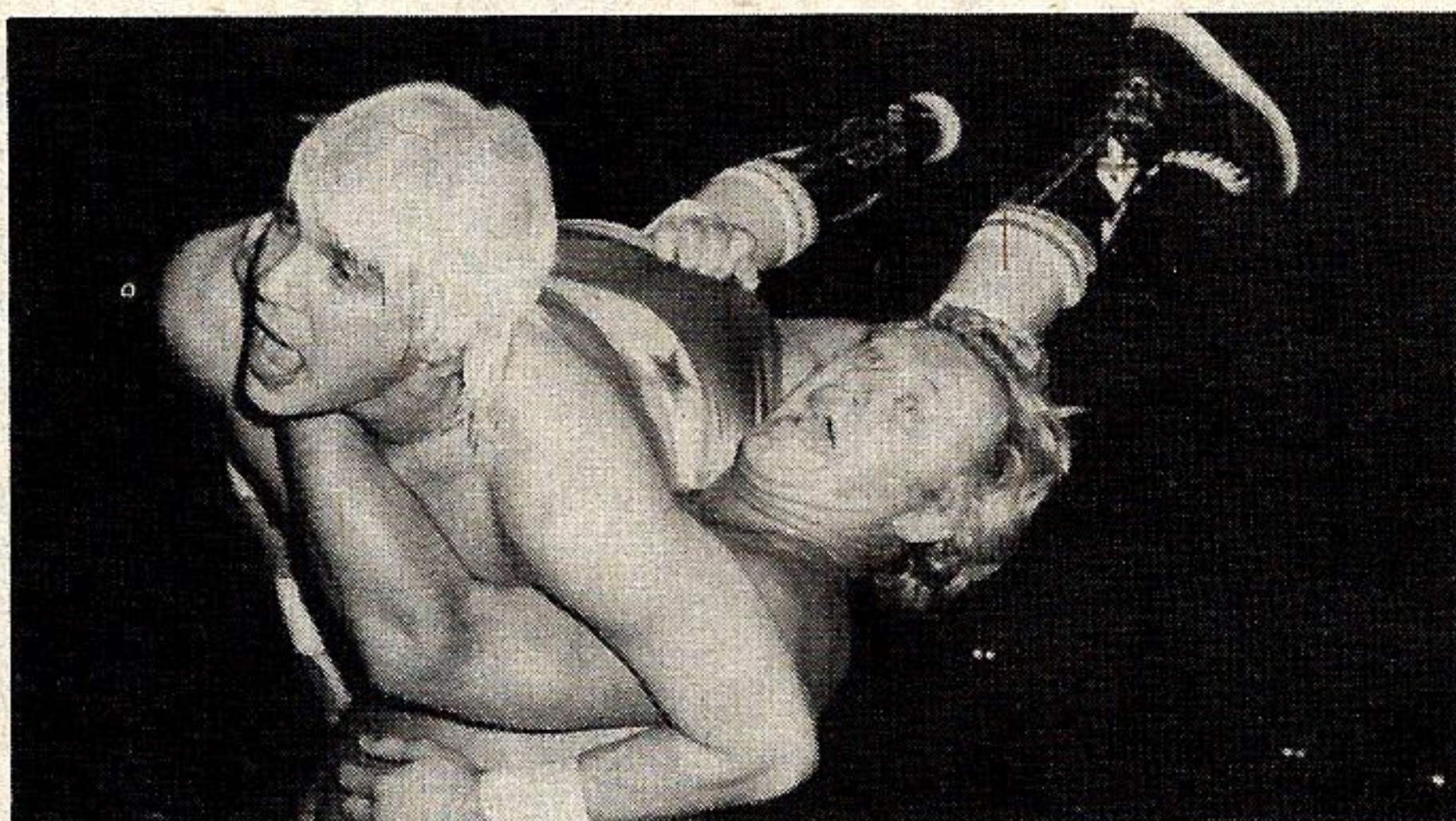
Although he does have an AWA World title reign to his credit, Fritz Von Erich is remembered more for his fearlessness and tenacity in the ring than for his championship achievements—

and his list of title achievements is quite formidable. Von Erich, who ranks among the greatest rule-breakers in the sport's history, is credited with developing the crippling iron claw.

8 NICK BOCKWINKEL

Through three AWA World title reigns, Nick Bockwinkel set the pace for one of the "Big Three" wrestling federations in the world. His first title reign began on November 8, 1975,

and except for two periods of time totaling about a year, he held the title through February 22, 1984. Bockwinkel is regarded as one of the most intelligent wrestlers ever to step through the ring ropes.



Nick Bockwinkel, slamming Tommy Rich, prides himself on being one of the smartest men ever to step into the ring. Although frequently criticized for his title-saving self-disqualifications, there is no denying his excellence.

TOP 10: THE EDITORS' LISTS



Shohei Baba

1. Bruno Sammartino
2. Ric Flair
3. Verne Gagne
4. Mil Mascaras
5. Bob Backlund
6. Harley Race
7. Shohei Baba
8. Bruiser Brody
9. Dusty Rhodes
10. Jack Brisco

COMMENTS: I was disappointed to find that Mil Mascaras didn't finish in the fans' top 10 wrestlers of *The Wrestler* years; he is, in my opinion, one of the greatest wrestlers of all time, and he's certainly made his impression on the sport during the time from 1966 to the present. Shohei Baba is a three-time NWA champion, but since he wrestles primarily in Japan and hasn't been afforded great media coverage in the United States, he is too often overlooked by too many people. Bruiser Brody is a loner, which helps explain his lack of world title success, but his capability is undeniable; he is a superb wrestler, and has proven so on dozens of occasions. —Craig Peters



Chief Strongbow

1. Don Leo Jonathan
2. Bruno Sammartino
3. Killer Kowalski
4. The Sheik
5. Kevin Von Erich
6. Mil Mascaras
7. Ric Flair
8. Nikita Koloff
9. Chief Jay Strongbow
10. Harley Race

COMMENTS: The first three choices are gimmies. Jonathan and Kowalski, big men who wrestled with the ease and grace of men half their size, were the best brawlers the sport has ever seen. Bruno is Bruno. The Sheik I admire for his singlemindedness. You never beat The Sheik, you survived the Sheik. Kevin Von Erich has as much natural skill as anyone. If he were tougher, he'd be closer to the top. The laws of gravity never applied to Mascaras, although the laws of levity did with some of those ridiculous masks. Come to me in 10 years and I wouldn't be surprised if Flair has pushed Don Leo down a notch. Nikita is a gamble, but then so was betting Secretariat. I'll take my chances. If Willie Mays hadn't played 12 years in Candlestick Park, he'd have hit 800 homeruns. If Strongbow hadn't spent his career in the WWF, he'd have been a world champ. I'm not much of a Harley Race fan but to win seven NWA titles he must be packing something besides that paunch.

—Eddie Ellner



Fabulous Moolah

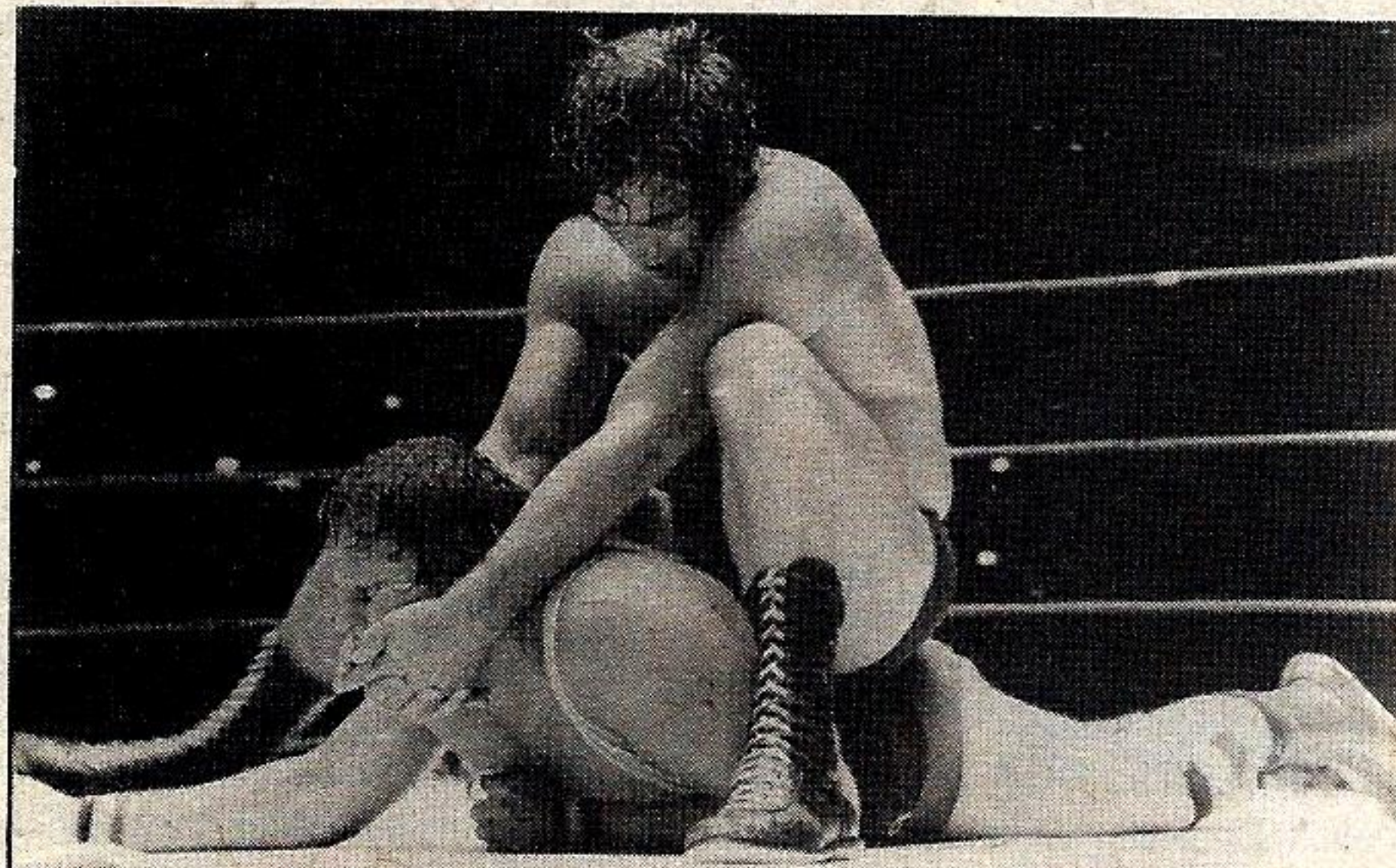
1. The Fabulous Moolah
2. Harley Race
3. Ric Flair
4. Terry Funk
5. Nick Bockwinkel
6. Verne Gagne
7. Dick the Bruiser
8. Killer Kowalski
9. Dory Funk Jr.
10. The Sheik

COMMENTS: Please don't take the rankings too seriously; I'd probably change them tomorrow, and again the next day according to my mood. I was tempted to peg the Funks as an exacta, but I guess that wouldn't be fair—both brothers merited their glory separately, beyond each other's shadow. Bruiser and Kowalski may seem a little archaic, but their prime years of eloquent brutality didn't end until midway through *The Wrestler* era. Many skeptics dismiss The Sheik's abilities, but he held the wrestling world in terror for two decades, and established many innovative catch-as-catch-can techniques (the camel clutch is one example.) The only wrestler on my list who inarguably deserves a ranking is Moolah; she was only a champ for 27 years, that's all. She belongs on top. Honorable kudos go to Stan Hansen, Mil Mascaras, Masked Superstar, Don Muraco, and Billy Robinson. —Jim Schuermann

9 JACK BRISCO

With two NWA World title reigns to his credit, several NWA World tag team titles, and dozens of major regional championships, Jack Brisco displayed consistent excellence throughout *The Wrestler* years. A former NCAA 191-pound heavyweight wres-

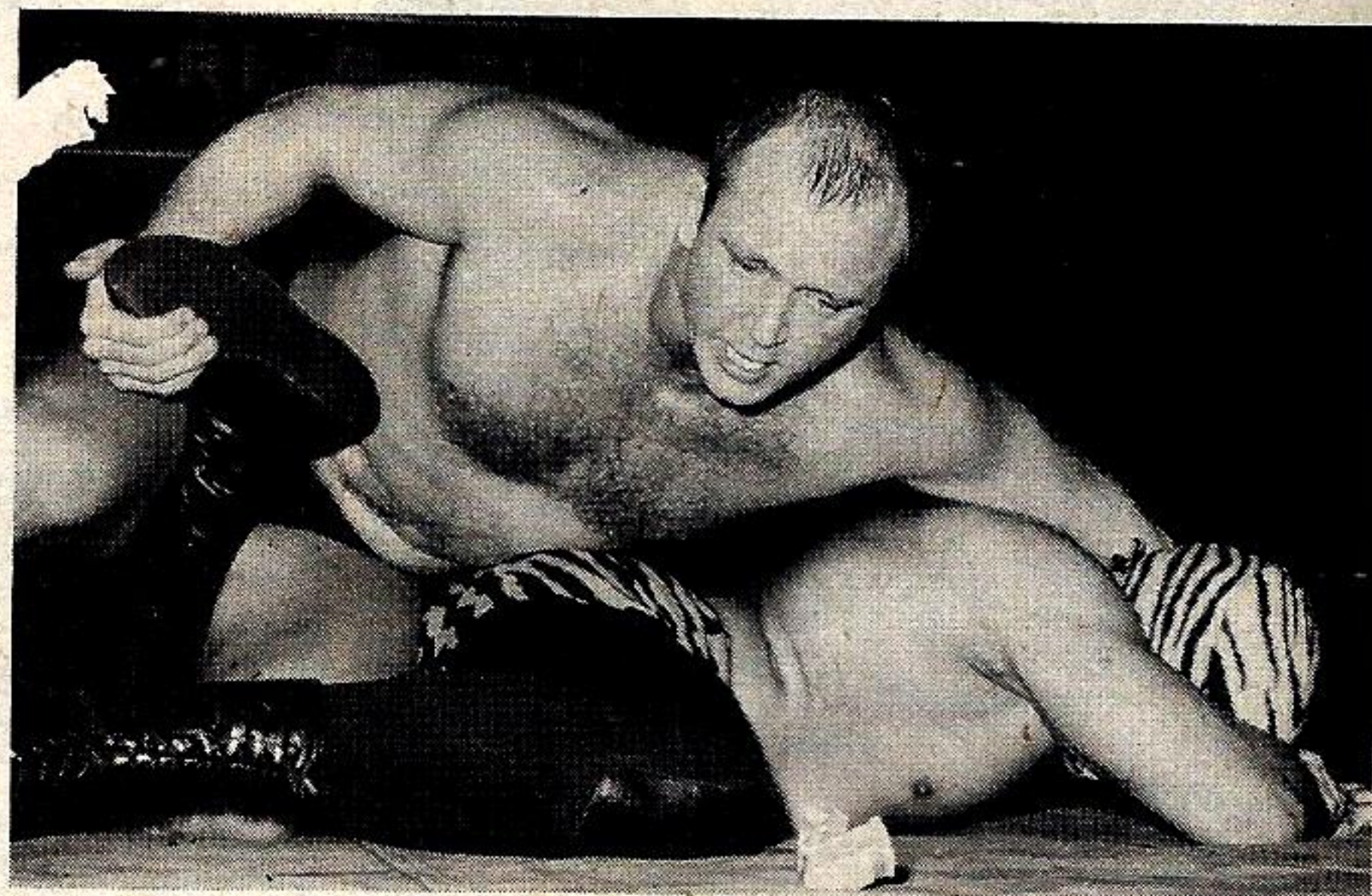
ting champion, Brisco used those amateur scientific skills to dazzle and confound opponents in the pro ranks. His NWA World title reigns lasted from July 20, 1973, to December 10, 1975—except for one week when he lost the belt to (and later regained it from) Shohei "Giant" Baba.



Jack Brisco, arguably the best amateur wrestler ever to turn professional, applies a camel clutch on another former amateur standout, Bob Roop.

10 DORY FUNK JR.

From February 11, 1969, ways, Dory personified NWA wrestling long before Gene Kiniski, until being and after that single reign,



Dory Funk Jr. applies a toe-hold on Mil Mascaras in Los Angeles. Funk wrestled any deserving challenger, anywhere, during his four-year NWA title reign.

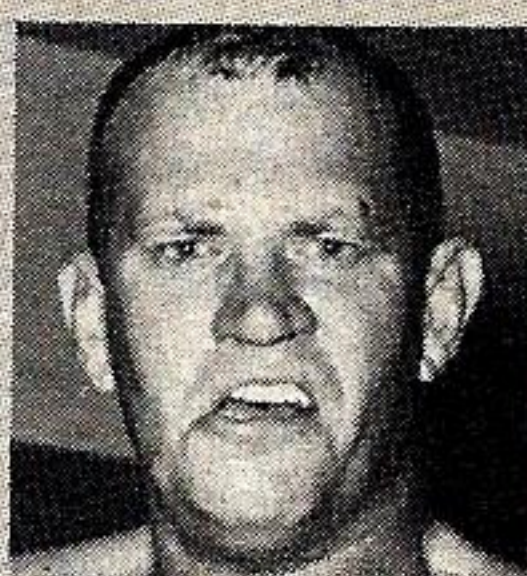
defeated by Harley Race on May 24, 1973, Dory Funk Jr. was the NWA World heavyweight champion. But his influence on wrestling went far beyond establishing himself as the most potent force on the wrestling scene in Florida, the Mid-Atlantic, and in Japan for many of *The Wrestler* years. □



Mil Mascaras

1. Mil Mascaras
2. Bruno Sammartino
3. Jack Brisco
4. Ric Flair
5. Dory Funk Jr.
6. Verne Gagne
7. Harley Race
8. Nick Bockwinkel
9. Cowboy Bob Ellis
10. Johnny Valentine

COMMENTS: A masked man for number one? Yes. Forget the flashy mask. As a fan, I was always dazzled by Mil Mascaras. The ease with which he slipped out of an opponent's grips and turned it to his advantage still amazes me. Bruno Sammartino was probably the most versatile grappler in history, being able to wrestle any opponent and change his style to combat them properly. Jack Brisco has to be the epitome of the classic scientific wrestler who showed his best during his NWA title reign. Ric Flair is this era's Buddy Rogers, but with more ring savvy. Dory Funk Jr., like Brisco, is a classic style wrestler. Verne Gagne had it all together in every phase of the sport and also had the best sleeperhold in history. Seven-time NWA champion Harley Race is the toughest wrestler I've ever seen. Nick Bockwinkel controlled the style and pace of all his matches during his prime. He was just as brilliant wrestling scientifically as he was brawling. Cowboy Bob Ellis was the most exciting man to watch during the early *Wrestler* years. He electrified the crowd with his bulldog headlock. Johnny Valentine was a practitioner of a brutal style of wrestling and his atomic skullcrusher was the most devastating maneuver I have ever witnessed. —Bill Apter



Fritz Von Erich

1. Bruno Sammartino
2. Jack Brisco
3. Bob Backlund
4. Ric Flair
5. Terry Funk
6. Fritz Von Erich
7. Don Leo Jonathan
8. Dusty Rhodes
9. Mr. Wrestling II
10. Superstar Graham

COMMENTS: I agree with the fans—Bruno was the best... Jack Brisco was the finest scientific wrestler I've ever seen. All he lacked was a mean streak... Bob Backlund combined power, courage, and scientific skill and was an underrated champion because he lacked flair... Ric Flair has flair and is the wrestler of the '80s. Before he's through he may be the all-time greatest... Terry Funk was smart and mean in his prime. His abilities were underrated because he was so disliked... Fritz Von Erich was one of the few wrestlers to find equal success as both a rulebreaker and fan favorite... Don Leo Jonathan was the best wrestler never to win a world title... Dusty's jivin' and jukin' throws fans and opponents off to his undeniable skill... Mr. Wrestling II: A dark horse in white. As good as he was, fans never saw him in his prime—that came in the days before he donned his famous white mask... Superstar Graham was the most underrated champion in history: Who else defended his title successfully against Mil Mascaras, Bruno Sammartino, Dusty Rhodes, and Harley Race? —Peter King



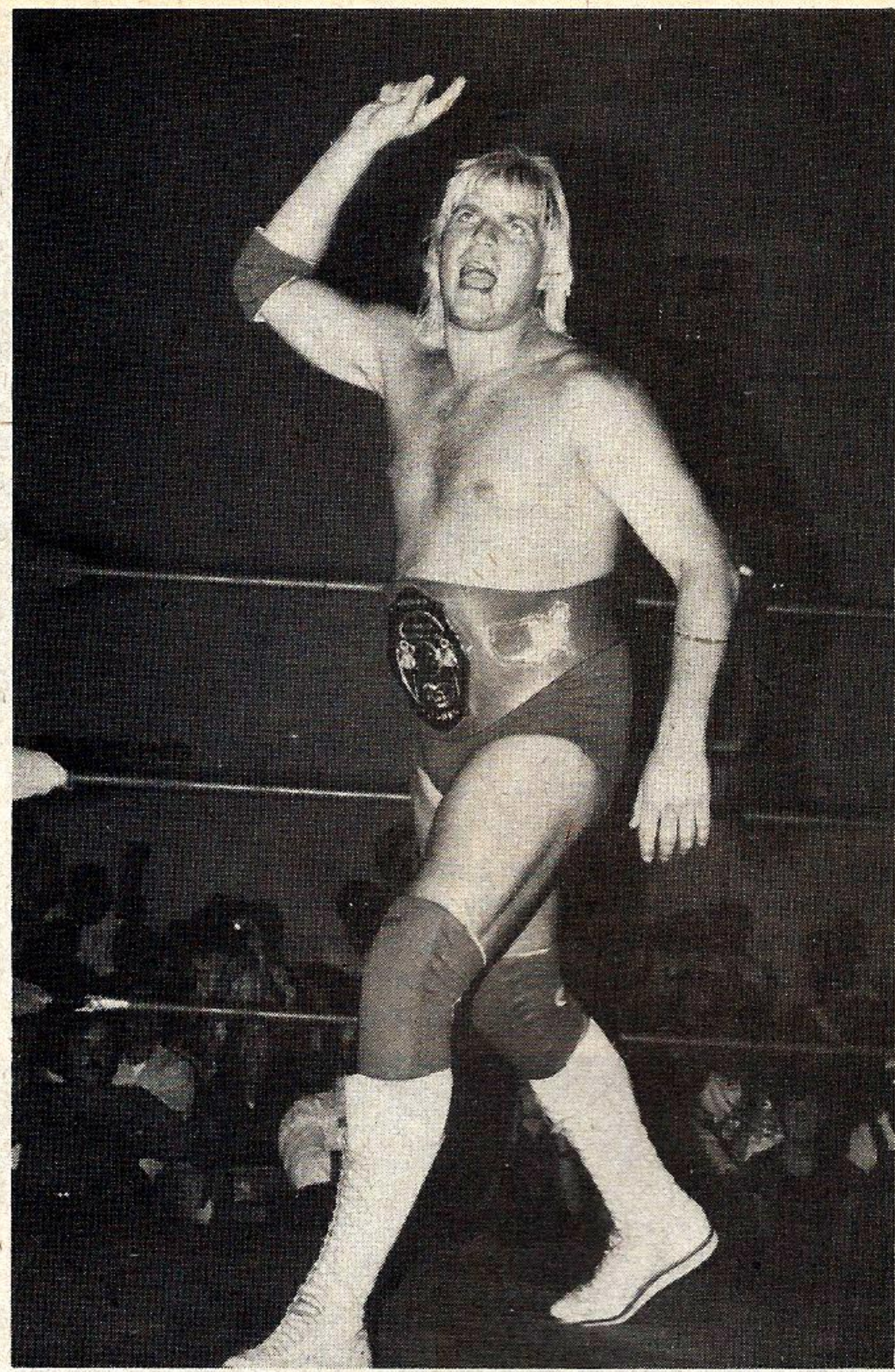
Karl Gotch

1. Bruno Sammartino
2. Karl Gotch
3. Verne Gagne
4. Killer Kowalski
5. Ric Flair
6. Mil Mascaras
7. Don Leo Jonathan
8. Bob Backlund
9. Hulk Hogan
10. Jack Brisco

COMMENTS: There might have been more gifted wrestlers than Bruno Sammartino, but in my mind nobody ever did more for the sport than the man who is so appropriately called "The Living Legend." Bruno wrestled and defeated just about every rulebreaker who is on mine or my colleagues' lists. He is the most determined athlete I have ever encountered. Karl Gotch may never have held any major titles, but he was the only wrestler I ever saw who could create new holds and maneuvers as a match progressed; his technical skills were unparalleled. One and two are my solid choices. I reluctantly place numbers two through 10 in order, though in my mind they could all be switched around or replaced by my honorable mention list that follows: Fred Blassie, Harley Race, The Original Tiger Mask, Dusty Rhodes, Andre the Giant, Kerry Von Erich, and Dory Funk Jr. —Stu Saks

**Wrestling
For Success:**

"WILDFIRE" TOMMY RICH LEARNS HOW TO CONTROL THE FLAME



Photos by Sam Lowe

All the signs point in the right direction. Tommy "Wildfire" Rich is poised for a comeback. He's got a new attitude and a renewed enthusiasm—and the best chance for winning the NWA World title that he's had in years!

"THE THING YOU have to understand, the thing I *had* to understand, is that these continuing feuds are self-destructive. Well, actually, *were* self-destructive. I'm not saying that I won't feud with anyone ever again; that's like saying I'll never wrestle again, and wrestling is my life's blood. Feuds are an inevitable part of wrestling. But I'll never get into one of those wars like I had with Buzz Sawyer. That almost put me down for the count, brother!"

Tommy Rich chuckles a little bit as he recalls his feud with the "Mad Dog," a feud that lasted nearly a year back in 1983 and

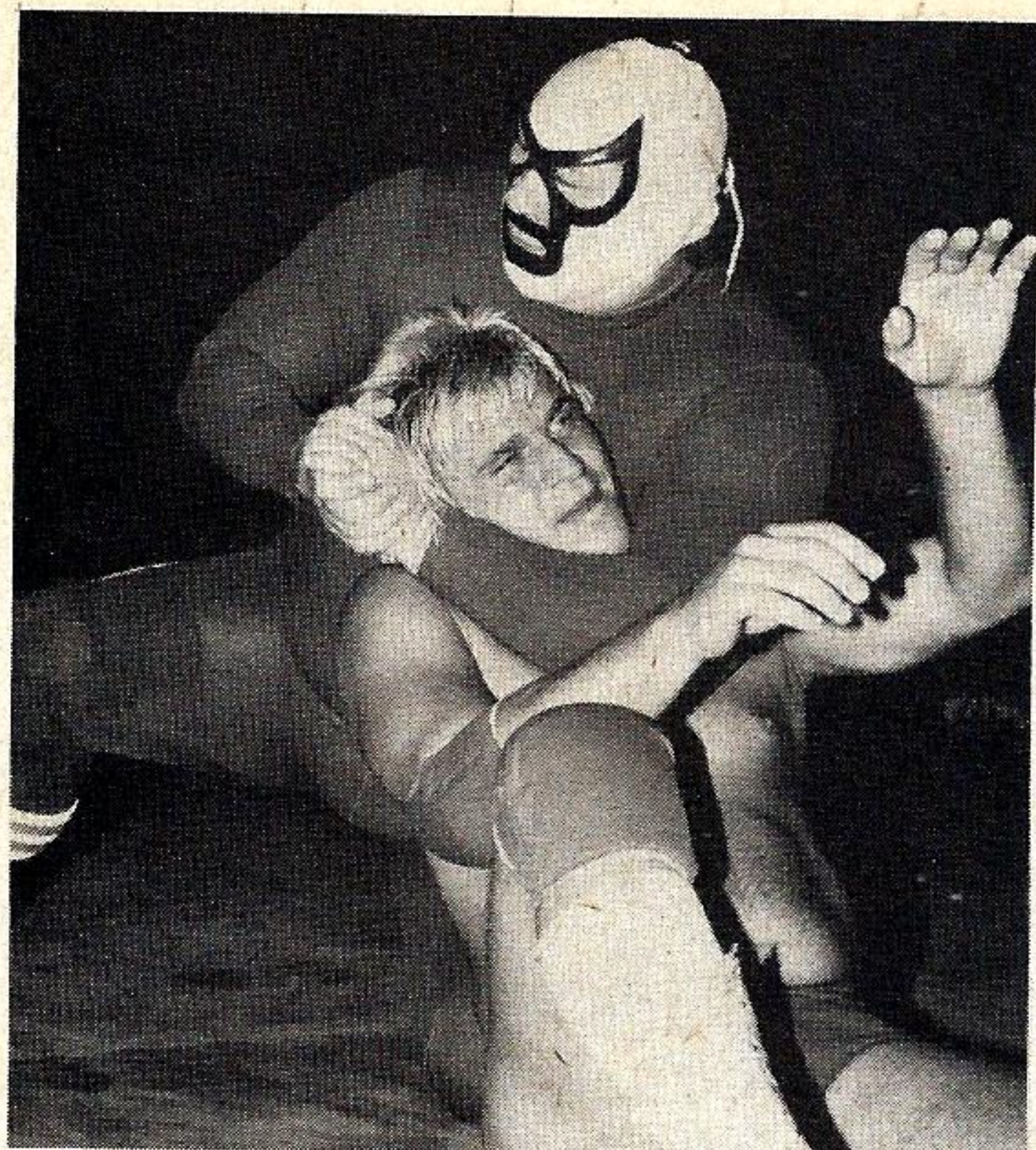
claimed more than its fair share of blood and agony on the part of both men.

Two years ago, an interview with Tommy was characterized by impassioned exhortations of destruction. He was willing to do anything to gain his revenge on Sawyer.

The tragedy of the situation was that by the time he realized that revenge was unattainable, Tommy was too far gone. Like a junkie unable to shake loose the burden of drug addiction, Tommy couldn't help himself when a contract for another match with Sawyer was placed in front of him. He *had* to sign. And sign he did, virtually

signing his life away as he submitted himself—some say masochistically—to Sawyer's savage attacks. "Wildfire" was raging out of control.

"I was really kind of blind," Rich said. "It was . . . well, it was a time in my life that was very painful to me. It still is painful. But I think it was something I had to go through, something I had to experience to get to the point where I am today. Sounds pretty sappy, I know, but it's true: it was a growth process for me. I'm not saying I'm glad it happened the way it did, but I am saying that I'm glad to be where I am today."



Tommy Rich had to wrestle from behind in this crucial match against The Flame. He calmly went about his job and ultimately succeeded. The Flame temporarily immobilizes Rich with a chinlock (above) and pounds the back of his neck outside the ring (right).



Once Rich has the advantage, he allows that momentum to work for him. Tommy sends the meaty champion into the opposite turnbuckles.

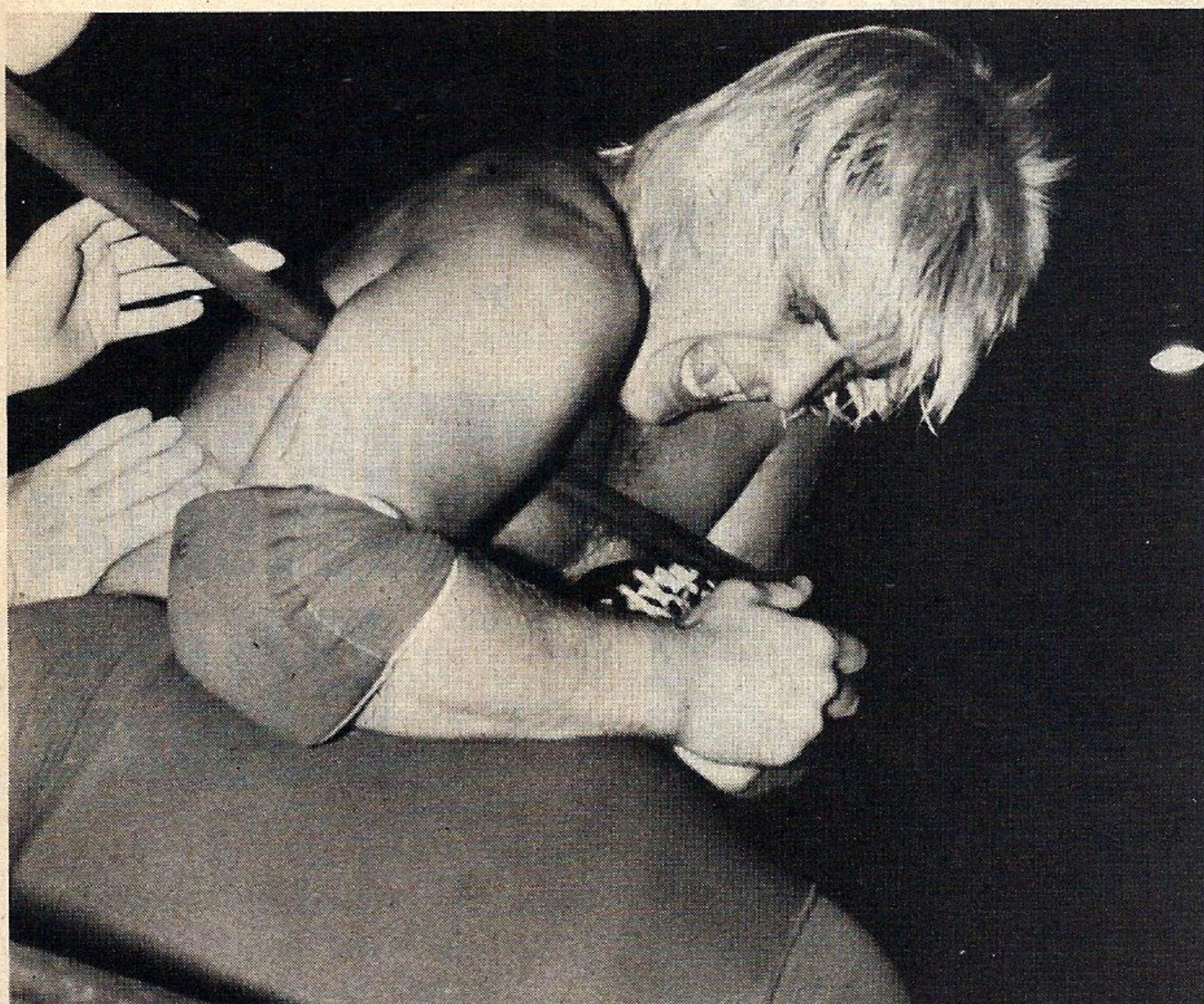
And where is Tommy Rich today?

"I'm the Southeast Continental champion!" Tommy says with that familiar smile that has melted the hearts of so many young women in arenas throughout the country. "I won this here belt from The Flame on August 2 in Birmingham, Alabama."

Tommy's voice is animated as he talks. In addition to the familiar smile, his face is accented by eyes that sparkle. But his enthusiasm is of a different variety than longtime fans of Tommy's might be familiar with. In this case, Tommy's enthusiasm is characterized not by a youthful exuberance, but rather with a sense of maturity and self-assurance. It's a refreshing change.

"Okay, so the Southeast Continental title isn't the NWA World championship," Tommy said, "and The Flame isn't Ric Flair. I know that. But this is a big step for me. It's the first step in my comeback, and it's the first time in a long time that I set a goal for myself, sat down and told myself what I had to do in order to attain that goal, and then went out and actually did it."

As if emphasizing his mental de-



termination with a physical trait, Tommy stabbed the air with a clenched fist as he spoke. And he spoke with earnest seriousness—seriousness he had never before shown.

"All my wrestling career I've been known as 'Wildfire,' and that's always been a meaningful name," Tommy said. "Hah! Gordon Solie once said that I had the burning flame of championship greatness in my soul . . . or something like that. Anyway, my flame was kind of burning out of control, kind of like a wild brushfire. I got caught up in those feuds, and I forgot all about my career and what I was about. Before I knew it, 'Wildfire' meant a bloodbath, and even all that blood couldn't put out that flame. I had to bring it under control myself."

Tommy took some time off from the rigors of mat competition to reassess himself and what he wanted to do in his career.

"I did a lot of hard thinking," Tommy says. "And I came back in early 1985 and I really thought I had my stuff together, but even then I had another lesson to learn. It takes more than just attitude, it takes a certain maturity, a certain

plan of attack, and a willingness to stick to that plan. I don't want 'Wildfire' to rage out of control, I want to keep myself *under* control. And that's what this title is all about."

Tommy patted the Southeast Continental belt that was resting on his lap.

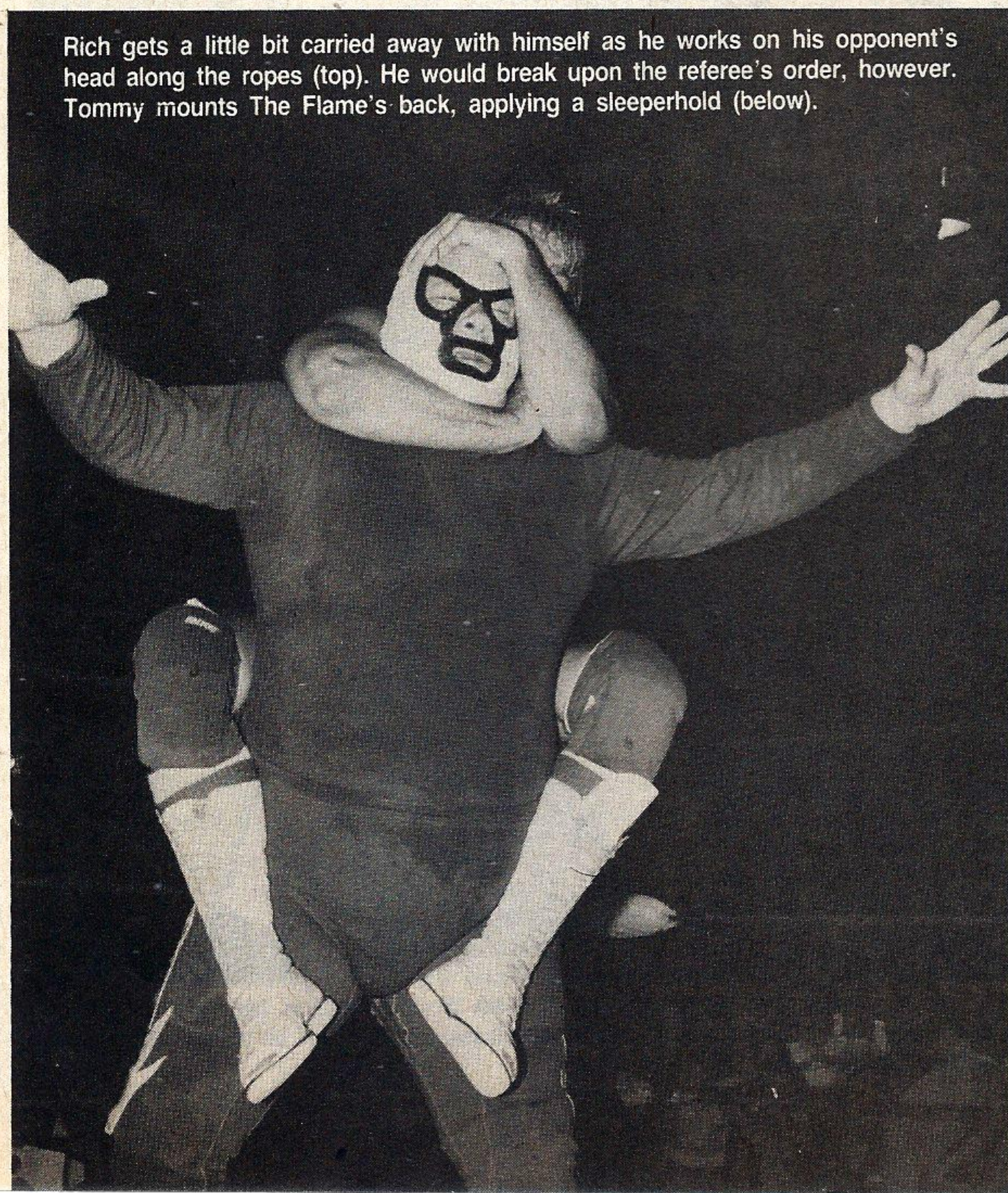
"This . . . this is the first step. This is the evidence to myself that I can do it. I *have* brought 'Wildfire' under control. It's ironic, isn't it? That my first step would come against a wrestler named 'The Flame.' That's kind of an omen to me, it's a symbol. 'Wildfire' is under control, and I've extinguished The Flame. *Hmmm*. Sounds like a good headline for a story, doesn't it?"

Tommy smiled broadly again, and for a moment it seemed as if the edges of that smile reached all the way to the tips of the blond locks framing his face.

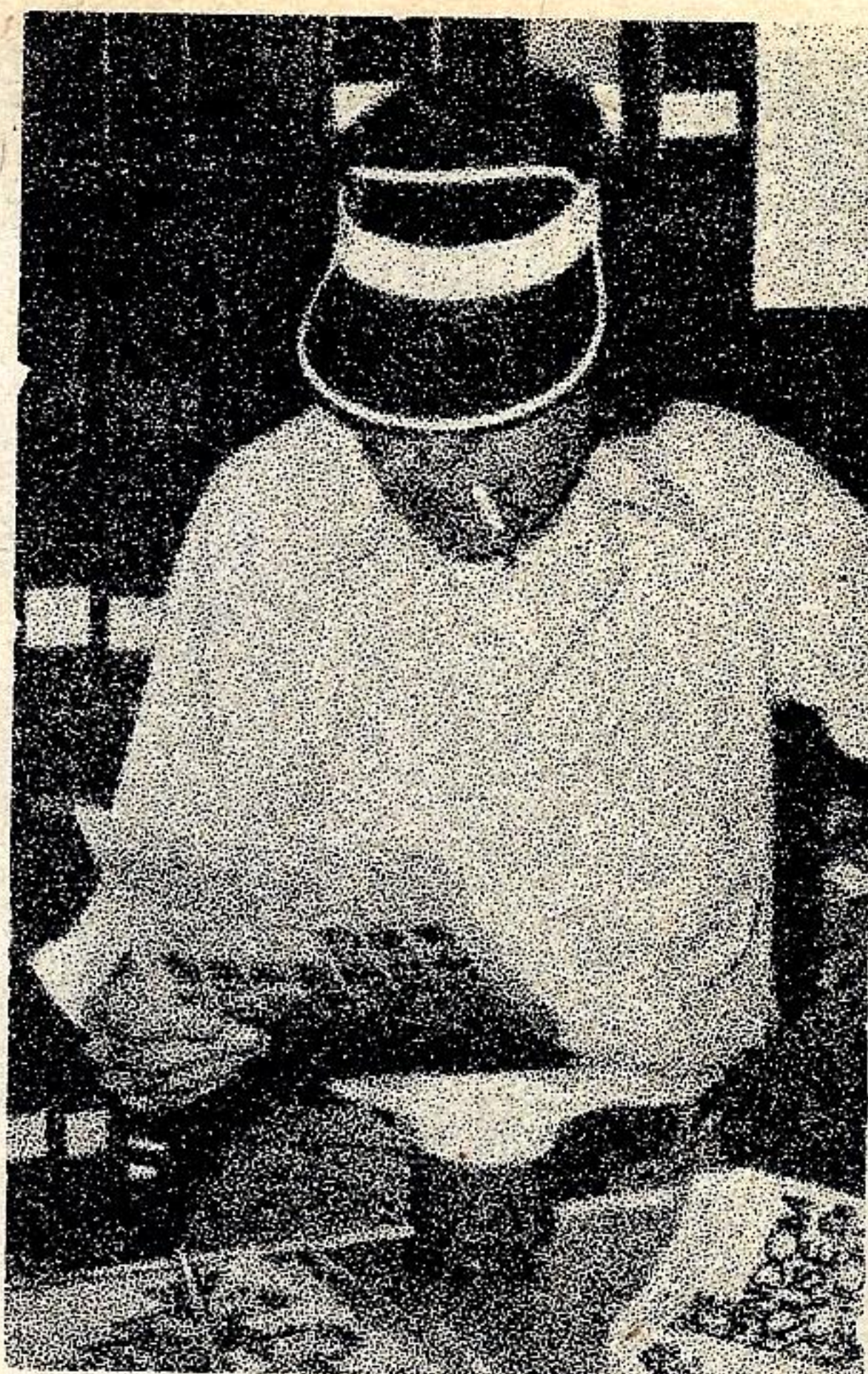
"Tommy Rich is back, brother, and make no mistake about it. I'm not gonna be screaming and fuming about Ric Flair and the NWA title . . . not yet, anyway. Everything in good time."

For Tommy Rich, there seem to be plenty of good times ahead. □

Rich gets a little bit carried away with himself as he works on his opponent's head along the ropes (top). He would break upon the referee's order, however. Tommy mounts The Flame's back, applying a sleeperhold (below).

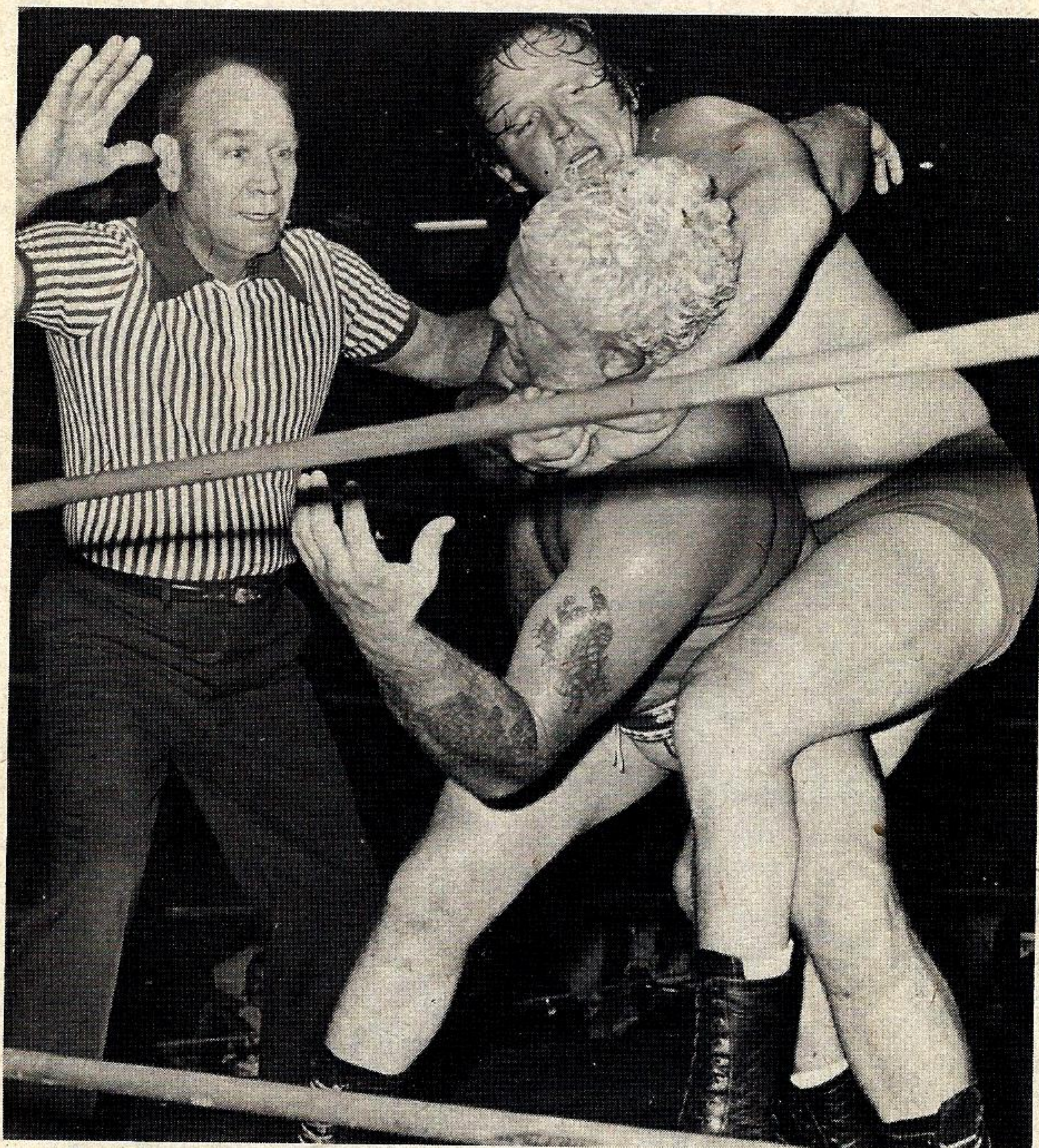


MATT BROCK'S



LOOKING BACK

MAY 24, 1973
HARLEY RACE vs. DORY FUNK JR.



Dory Funk Jr., already into his fourth year as NWA World champion, traps Harley Race in an abdominal stretch. Several months later, this classic match would be voted 1973's Match of the Year by the fans.

THIS SEEMS TO me to be the time of year to reflect back on the *truly* classic matches of the sport.

Sure, I know, I know, isn't that supposed to be the idea of this column anyway? Well, yeah, but let's face it: The last "Looking Back" column I did, in the November 1985 issue of this magazine, Gorilla Monsoon vs. Victor Rivera, was an interesting match, and it's interesting to look back on mainly because of where Monsoon is on the wrestling scene today. But it wasn't a *classic* match.

Classic matches . . . well, they're few and far between. There are maybe one or two truly classic matches in any given year. If that many.

And why is this the time to look back on *classic* matches? Well, this is the time of year when the recipients of the annual *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* achievement awards are being considered by fans around the country. One of those awards is for a "Match of the Year," and I wonder how many fans will look to the really superb matches as candi-

dates for this award rather than to the hyped-up idiocy sometimes exhibited by more than one major promoter on this Earth of ours.

Anyway, this time of year always puts me in a reflective mood, so I thought it would be appropriate to look back on one of the genuinely classic matches not only of the year 1973, but of all time.

Harley Race vs. Dory Funk Jr. Fans today can scarcely appreciate what those words meant to a fan a dozen years ago. Maybe if you think about a Ric Flair vs. Bruiser Brody match, or a Hulk Hogan vs. Kerry Von Erich matchup, you can begin to know the kind of excitement and possibilities that were stirred up when Race and Dory signed on the dotted line.

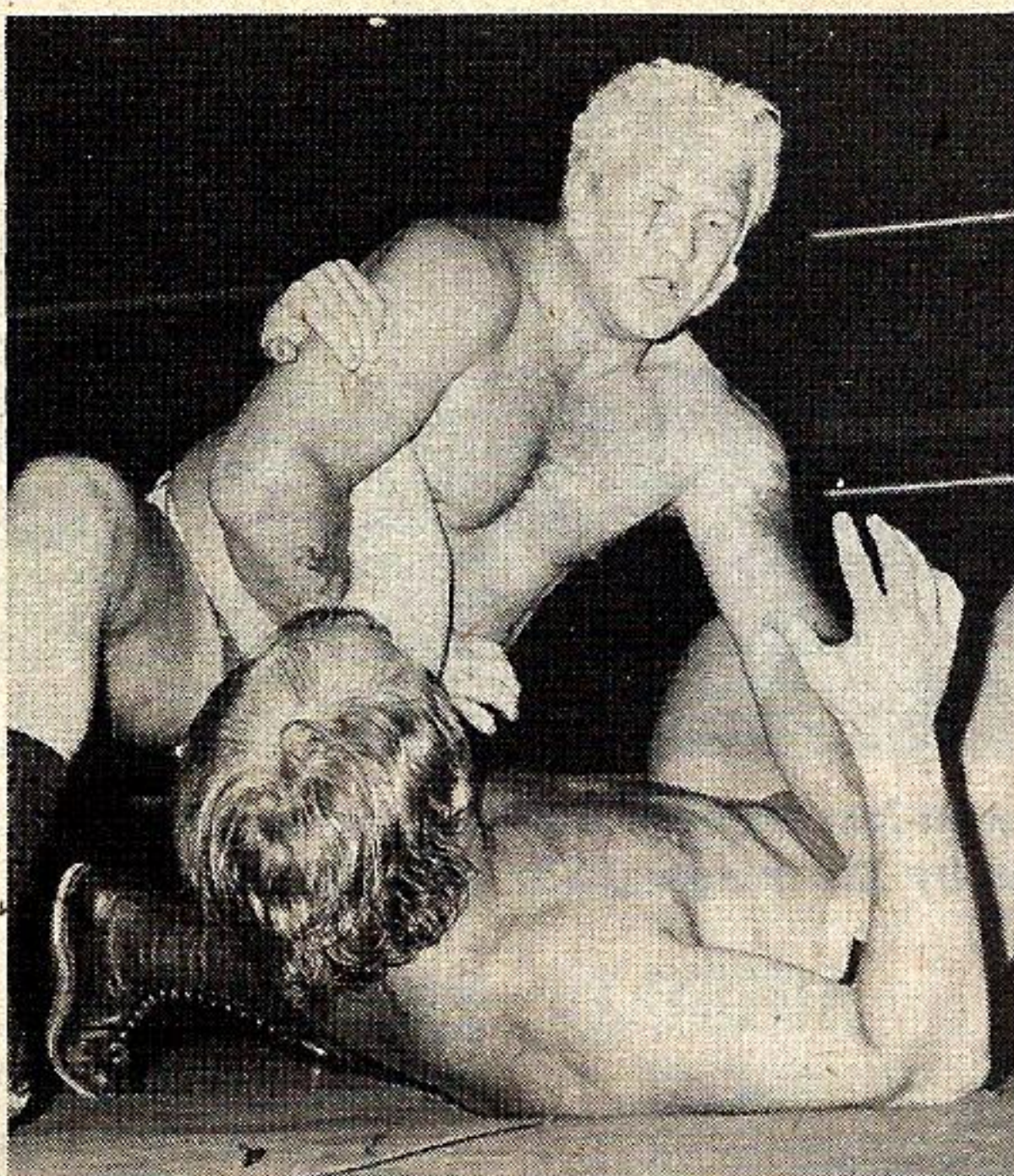
Dory was over four years into his NWA World title reign, which began when he beat Gene Kiniski in '69 in Florida. He was a heck of a champion, and the bolo punch became the offensive weapon of note in the same way Flair's figure-four leglock is regarded today.

Race was already a proven commodity in the sport, having established himself most notably as the man who waded his way through a rugged line of competitors in the 1972 tournament to determine the first Missouri State champion.

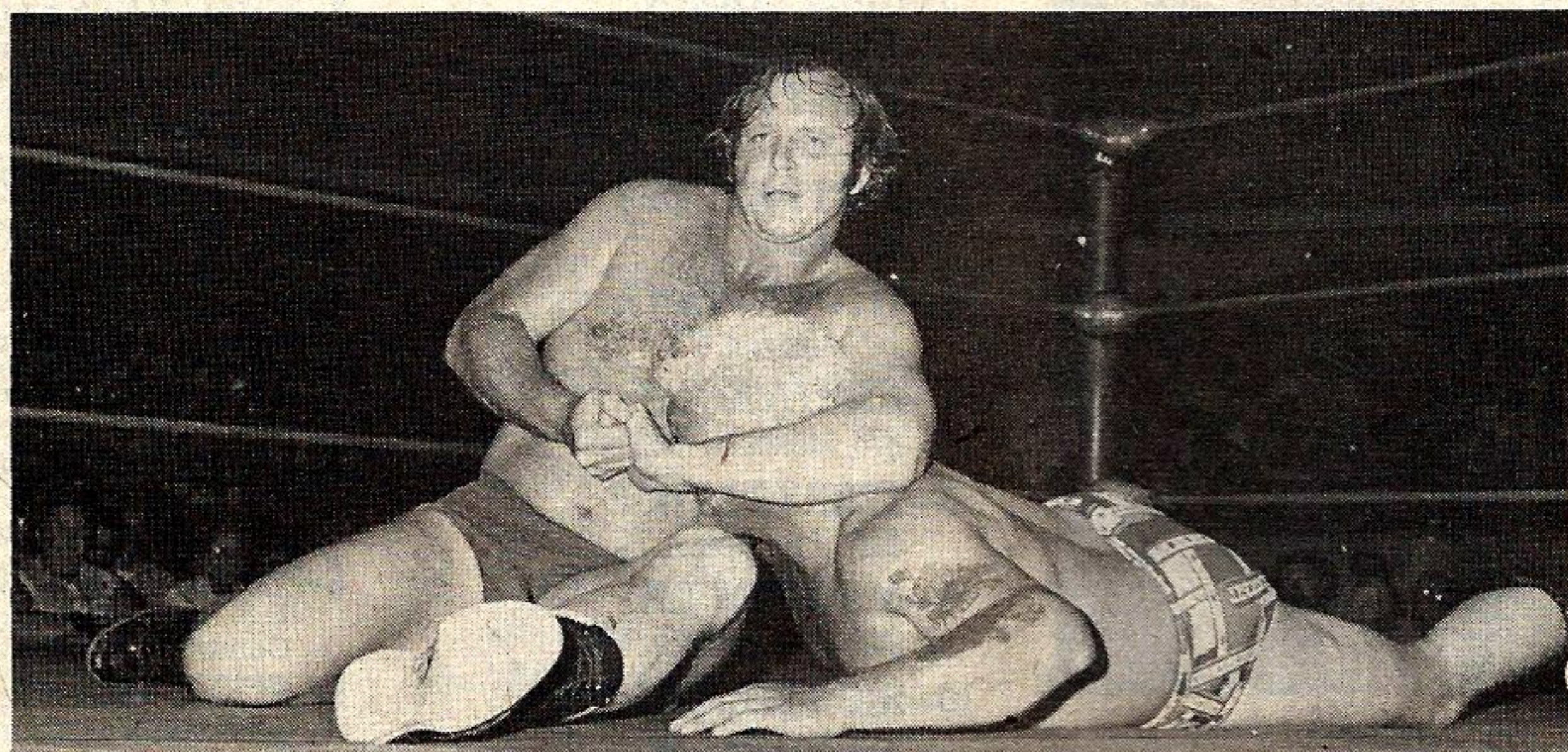
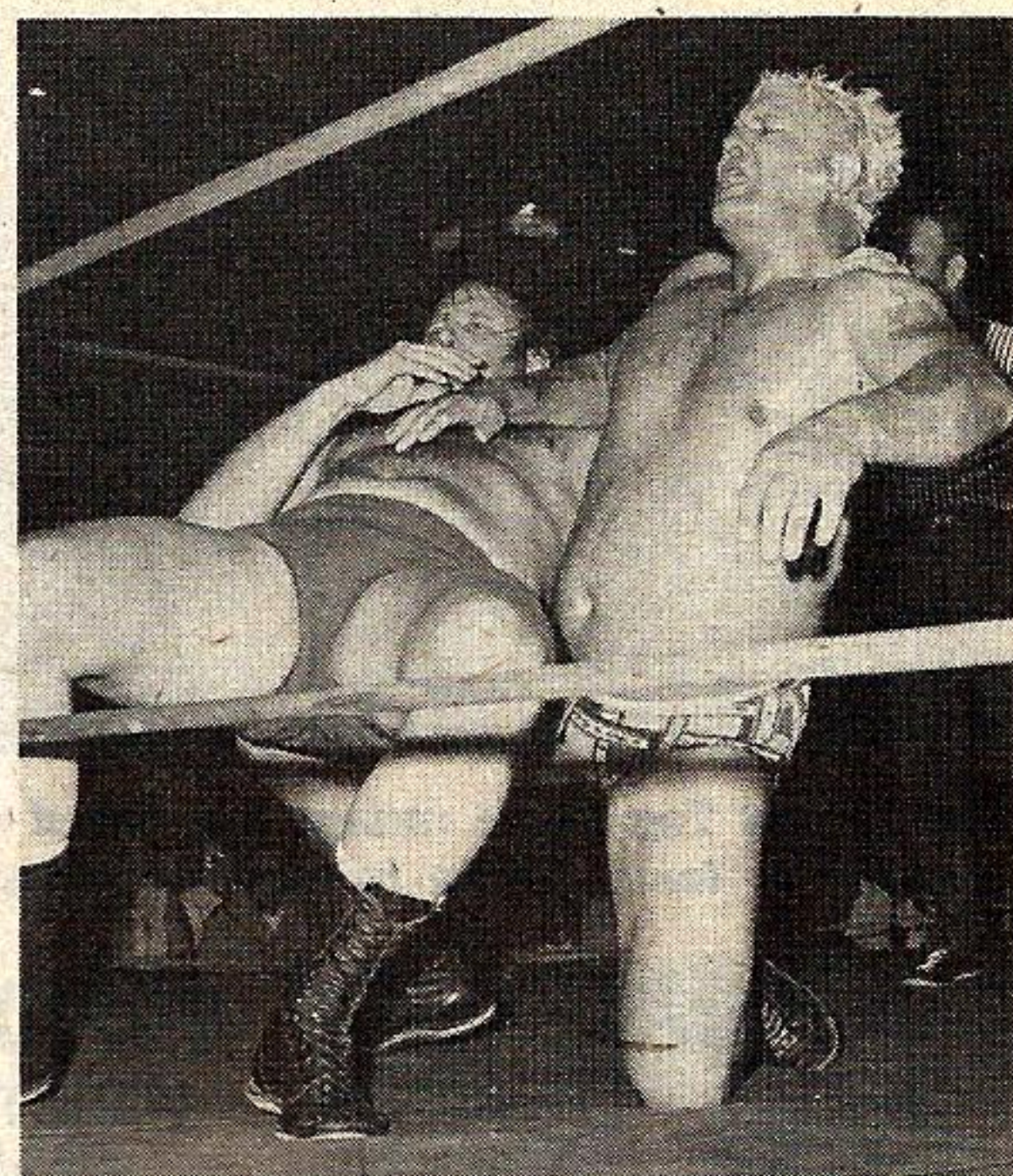
And if the phrase "steppingstone to the NWA World title" had a definite origin, it was on May 24, 1973.

I wonder if any fan in Kansas City, Missouri, that night had even the slightest inkling of where Race would be taking the NWA World title over the next decade. Not only would Harley make the title his own, he would bounce back from defeat half a dozen times to claim status as the one and only man in the history of the world to wear the coveted strap on seven separate occasions.

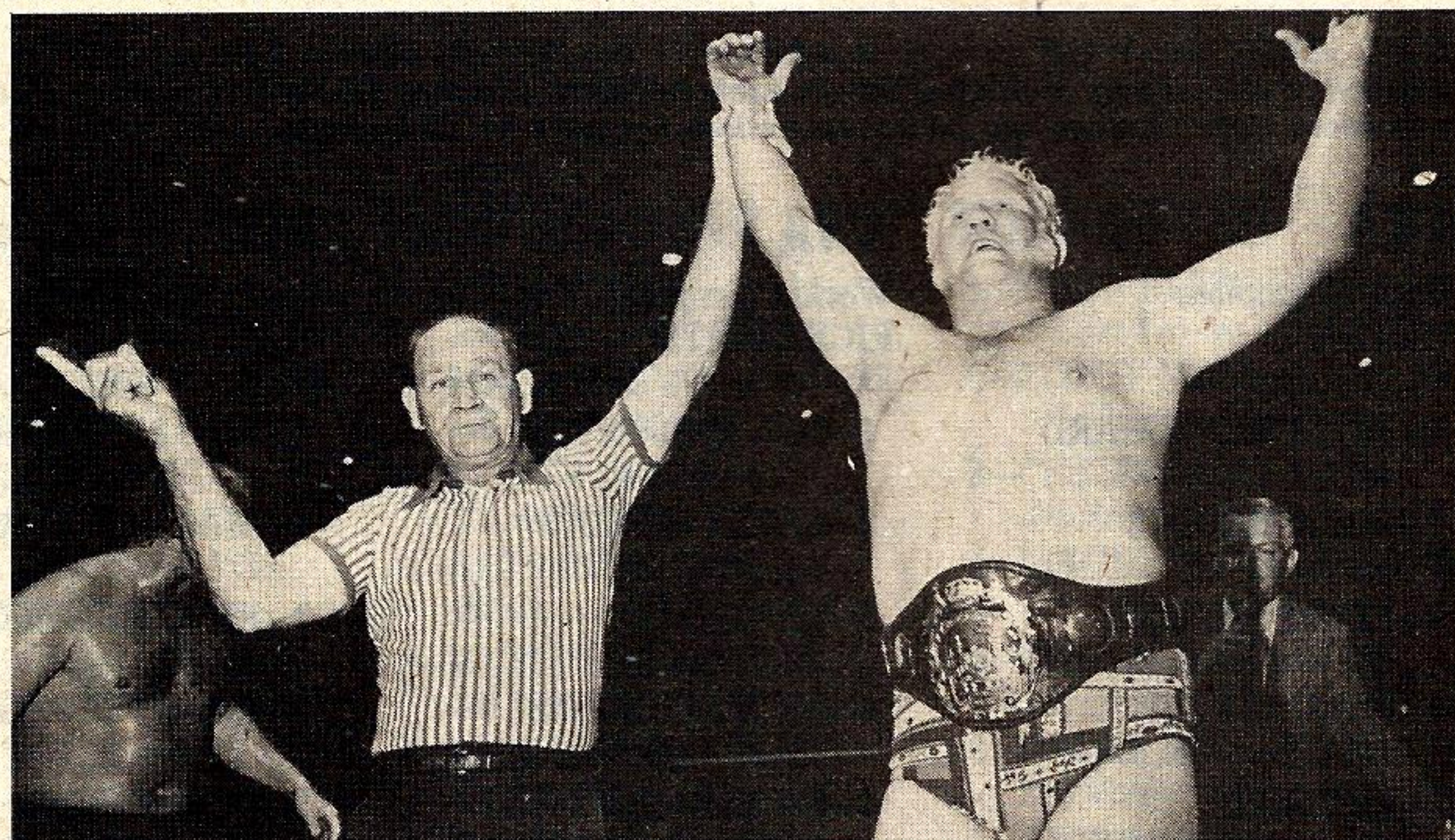
But on that night in Kansas City, all that existed was pure competition. Human chess at its finest, as my pal Gordon Solie likes to say, and Race and Dory were the



Above left: Caught in an armlock, Funk would not place his foot on the ropes to get an easy escape: It was that type of match. Above right: A fatigued Race manages to slam the champion's back against his knee.



Above: Momentarily holding his challenger in place, Funk seems to be trying to think of a way to stop this determined challenger. Below: Race is declared NWA World champion for the first of an eventual record seven times.



twin grandmasters of the game. It was a beautiful thing to watch: pure strategic wrestling at its very finest. And if you want to see firsthand a tape of the action in Race's first NWA World title win, check out the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* "Lords of the Ring" videotape (no, I do not receive a royalty on each tape rent-

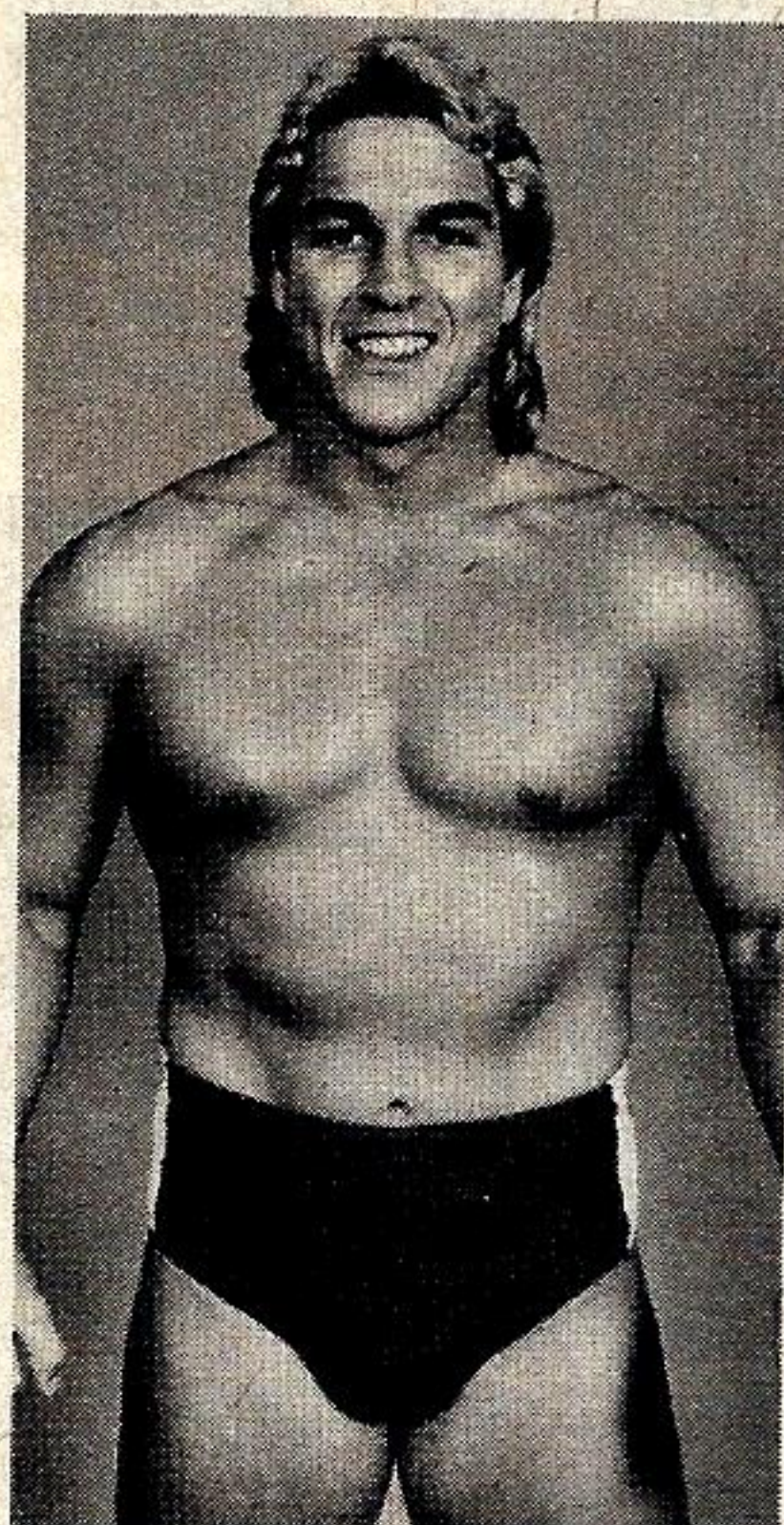
ed or sold!).

A classic match, the first of seven such achievements for Harley Race. It was the kind of match that truly defines professional wrestling. The stuff history is made of.

Remember that when you cast your vote for 1985 Match of the Year. □

OFF WRESTLIN

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board.



Terry Taylor

TOP 10

- 1—**RIC FLAIR**
243, Minneapolis, MN
- 2—**RICK MARTEL**
236, Quebec City, Quebec
- 3—**HULK HOGAN**
302, Venice Beach, CA
- 4—**TULLY BLANCHARD**
235, San Antonio, TX
- 5—**DUSTY RHODES**
302, Austin, TX
- 6—**TITO SANTANA**
245, Mission, TX
- 7—**NIKITA KOLOFF**
275, Moscow, Russia
- 8—**TERRY TAYLOR**
225, Vero Beach, FL
- 9—**MAGNUM T.A.**
245, Chesapeake, VA
- 10—**RICK STEAMBOAT**
238, Honolulu, HI

TAG TEAMS

- 1—**THE ROAD WARRIORS**
AWA World tag team champions
Combined weight: 567 pounds
- 2—**RICK MORTON & ROBERT GIBSON**
NWA World tag team champions
Combined weight: 453 pounds
- 3—**GREG VALENTINE & BRUTUS BEEFCAKE**
WWF World tag team champions
Combined weight: 511 pounds
- 4—**OLE & ARN ANDERSON**
National tag team champions
Combined weight: 525 pounds
- 5—**AL PEREZ & WENDELL COOLEY**
Mid-South tag team champions
Combined weight: 451 pounds
- 6—**CHRIS ADAMS & GINO HERNANDEZ**
No. 1 contenders to World Class tag team title
Combined weight: 454 pounds
- 7—**DENNIS CONDREY & BOBBY EATON**
No. 1 contenders to NWA tag team title
Combined weight: 472 pounds
- 8—**WAHOO McDANIEL & BILLY JACK HAYNES**
U.S. tag team champions
Combined weight: 505 pounds
- 9—**STEVE KEIRN & STAN LANE**
Mid-Southern tag team champions
Combined weight: 479 pounds
- 10—**BARRY WINDHAM & MIKE ROTUNDO**
No. 1 contenders to WWF tag team title
Combined weight: 475 pounds

NWA, AWA, and WWF ratings, in addition to the regional ratings from around the country, are based on the official current position of challengers to the top title in each category. (Certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings). Most Popular and Most Hated ratings are based on nationwide surveys of wrestling fans and mail that comes to our offices.

NWA

World Champion:

RIC FLAIR

243, Minneapolis, MN

- 1—**TULLY BLANCHARD**
235, San Antonio, TX
- 2—**DUSTY RHODES**
302, Austin, TX
- 3—**TERRY TAYLOR**
225, Vero Beach, FL
- 4—**MAGNUM T.A.**
245, Chesapeake, VA
- 5—**RICK RUDE**
246, Robbinsdale, MN
- 6—**NIKITA KOLOFF**
275, Moscow, Russia
- 7—**WAHOO McDANIEL**
260, Midland, TX
- 8—**KERRY VON ERICH**
260, Denton, TX
- 9—**HARLEY RACE**
253, Kansas City, MO
- 10—**BRIAN ADIDAS**
238, Denton, TX

AWA

World Champion:

RICK MARTEL

236, Quebec City, Quebec

- 1—**SGT. SLAUGHTER**
310, Parris Island, SC
- 2—**LARRY ZBYSKO**
248, Pittsburgh, PA
- 3—**JIM GARVIN**
235, Tampa, FL
- 4—**MICHAEL HAYES**
255, Marietta, GA
- 5—**NICK BOCKWINKEL**
245, Beverly Hills, CA
- 6—**GREG GAGNE**
220, Robbinsdale, MN
- 7—**BORIS ZURKHOV**
254, Leningrad, Russia
- 8—**BUCK ZUMHOFE**
222, Hamburg, MN
- 9—**CURT HENNIG**
235, Minneapolis, MN
- 10—**RAY STEVENS**
243, San Francisco, CA

WWF

World Champion:

HULK HOGAN

302, Venice Beach, CA

- 1—**TITO SANTANA**
245, Mission, TX
- 2—**MAGNIFICENT MURACO**
274, Sunset Beach, HA
- 3—**RICK STEAMBOAT**
238, Honolulu, HI
- 4—**RANDY SAVAGE**
245, Sarasota, FL
- 5—**RODDY PIPER**
231, Scotland
- 6—**PAUL ORNDORFF**
253, Brandon, FL
- 7—**JUNKYARD DOG**
260, New Orleans, LA
- 8—**ANDRE THE GIANT**
505, Grenoble, France
- 9—**TERRY FUNK**
247, Amarillo, TX
- 10—**KING KONG BUNDY**
446, Atlantic City, NJ

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

- 1—**TULLY BLANCHARD**
235, San Antonio, TX
- 2—**TERRY TAYLOR**
225, Vero Beach, FL
- 3—**DUSTY RHODES**
302, Austin, TX
- 4—**NIKITA KOLOFF**
275, Moscow, Russia
- 5—**MAGNUM T.A.**
245, Chesapeake, VA
- 6—**RONNIE GARVIN**
231, Montreal, Quebec
- 7—**JIMMY VALIANT**
251, New York, NY
- 8—**MANNY FERNANDEZ**
245, El Paso, TX
- 9—**KONGA THE BARBARIAN**
265, Chicago
- 10—**SAM HOUSTON**
218, Waco, TX

ICIAL G RATINGS

WORLD CLASS

- 1—**ICEMAN PARSONS**
242, St. Louis, MO
- 2—**GINO HERNANDEZ**
224, Houston, TX
- 3—**BRUISER BRODY**
284, Albuquerque, NM
- 4—**KEVIN VON ERICH**
239, Denton, TX
- 5—**CHRIS ADAMS**
230, Stratford, England
- 6—**KERRY VON ERICH**
260, Denton, TX
- 7—**BRIAN ADIDAS**
238, Denton, TX
- 8—**ONE MAN GANG**
468, Chicago, IL
- 9—**KABUKI**
252, Singapore
- 10—**KILLER BROOKS**
235, Lancaster, TX

MID-SOUTH

- 1—**DICK MURDOCH**
270, Waxahachie, TX •
- 2—**BUTCH REED**
265, Kansas City, MO
- 3—**HACKSAW DUGGAN**
280, Glens Falls, NY
- 4—**TED DiBIASE**
247, Omaha, NB
- 5—**JAKE ROBERTS**
243, Baton Rouge, LA
- 6—**HUMONGOUS**
318, parts unknown
- 7—**THE BARBARIAN**
316, parts unknown
- 8—**STEVE WILLIAMS**
295, Tulsa, OK
- 9—**DICK SLATER**
235, Tampa, FL
- 10—**BUZZ SAWYER**
240, St. Petersburg, FL

FLORIDA

- 1—**RICK RUDE**
246, Robbinsdale, MN
- 2—**KENDELL WINDHAM**
220, Sweetwater, TX
- 3—**WAHOO McDANIEL**
260, Midland, TX
- 4—**BILLY JACK HAYNES**
245, Portland, OR
- 5—**KEVIN SULLIVAN**
239, Boston, MA
- 6—**MIKE GRAHAM**
229, Tampa, FL
- 7—**PLAYBOY BUDDY ROSE**
245, Minneapolis, MN
- 8—**BOB ROOP**
273, Tampa, FL
- 9—**BUGSY McGRAW**
268, New York, NY
- 10—**JACK HART**
230, St. Petersburg, FL

MID-SOUTHERN

- 1—**JERRY LAWLER**
234, Memphis, TN
- 2—**KOKO WARE**
229, Union City, TN
- 3—**PHIL HICKERSON**
238, Jackson, TN
- 4—**TARRUS BALBA**
237, Outer Mongolia
- 5—**BOTA**
270, Maori Islands
- 6—**MONGOLIAN STOMPER**
259, Mongolia
- 7—**TOJO YAMAMOTO**
230, Tokyo, Japan
- 8—**LORD JONATHAN BOYD**
255, Auckland, New Zealand
- 9—**RIP MORGAN**
250, Auckland, New Zealand
- 10—**BILLY TRAVIS**
218, Houston, TX

CONTINENTAL

- 1—**TOMMY RICH**
238, Hendersonville, TN
- 2—**EXOTIC ADRIAN STREET**
227, South Wales
- 3—**THE FLAME**
305, parts unknown
- 4—**JIMMY GOLDEN**
234, Montgomery, AL
- 5—**ROBERT FULLER**
238, Dyresburg, TN
- 6—**BRAD ARMSTRONG**
226, Marietta, GA
- 7—**ROBERTO SOTO**
231, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 8—**RON FULLER**
285, Dyresburg, AL
- 9—**BILL ASH**
224, Paris, AK
- 10—**ROY WELCH**
224, Tampa, FL

NORTHWEST

- 1—**RICKY VAUGHAN**
245, Tampa, FL
- 2—**MIKE MILLER**
260, Memphis, TN
- 3—**ALEXIS SMIRNOFF**
255, Russia
- 4—**BOBBY JAGGERS**
265, Dunlap, KS
- 5—**TIMOTHY FLOWERS**
245, New York, NY
- 6—**JOE SAVOLDI**
232, Parsippany, NJ
- 7—**STEVE SIMPSON**
220, Africa
- 8—**CHRIS COLT**
230, San Francisco, CA
- 9—**MOONDOG MORETTI**
245, Boise, ID
- 10—**SCOTT DORING**
270, Minneapolis, MN

MOST POPULAR

- 1—**HULK HOGAN**
302, Venice Beach, CA
- 2—**MAGNUM T.A.**
245, Chesapeake, VA
- 3—**DUSTY RHODES**
302, Austin, TX
- 4—**KERRY VON ERICH**
260, Denton, TX
- 5—**RICK STEAMBOAT**
238, Honolulu, HI
- 6—**RICK MARTEL**
236, Quebec City, Quebec
- 7—**KEVIN VON ERICH**
239, Denton, TX
- 8—**TERRY TAYLOR**
225, Vero Beach, FL
- 9—**SGT. SLAUGHTER**
310, Parris Island, SC
- 10—**TITTO SANTANA**
245, Mission, TX

MOST HATED

- 1—**TULLY BLANCHARD**
235, San Antonio, TX
- 2—**RODDY PIPER**
231, Glasgow, Scotland
- 3—**CHRIS ADAMS**
230, Stratford, England
- 4—**MAGNIFICENT MURACO**
274, Sunset Beach, HI
- 5—**TED DiBIASE**
247, Omaha, NB
- 6—**NIKITA KOLOFF**
276, Moscow, Russia
- 7—**RICK RUDE**
246, Robbinsdale, MN
- 8—**RANDY SAVAGE**
245, Sarasota, FL
- 9—**OLE ANDERSON**
256, Minneapolis, MN
- 10—**GINO HERNANDEZ**
224, Houston, TX

For period ended September 26, 1985

RATINGS ANALYSIS

Every month, this column will tell fans how we go about rating more than 150 wrestlers in 14 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important—and respected—ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans.

A look at some unusual ratings categories: For the past few months, the editors of this magazine have been toying with the idea of presenting ratings for three categories: managers, valets, and six-man tag teams. In this installment of "Ratings Analysis," we present a look at those three categories.

Managers: In this category, we present a one through 10 listing of managers based on several criteria. First and foremost is a purely objective consideration: the won-loss record of the individual's stable over the past 30 days. Other criteria are more subjective: the direction in which the manager has taken his stable in the past month, the degree of interference (or lack thereof, and the reasons thereof) that the individual has exhibited, and the individual's general impact on the wrestling world in general. Rather than listing weights and hometowns beneath the names, we've included names of major wrestlers in the manager's stable, though due to space limitations these lists cannot be all-inclusive.

MANAGERS



Jim Cornette

- 1—JIM CORNETTE
The Midnight Express
- 2—PAUL ELLERING
The Road Warriors
- 3—BOBBY HEENAN
Studd, Link, Adonis
- 4—GARY HART
OMG, Lewin, Brooks
- 5—LOU ALBANO
U.S. Express, Andre, Steele
- 6—JIMMY HART
Valentine, Bundy, Funk
- 7—PERCY PRINGLE
Jack Hart, Rick Rude
- 8—PAUL JONES
Konga, Graham, Abdullah
- 9—GEN. SKANDOR AKBAR
Kareem Muhammad, Kamala
- 10—JOHNNY VALIANT
Brutus Beefcake

Valets: In this category we present a listing of the top five valets based wholly on subjective concerns. Since valets are generally frivolous luxuries to a wrestler, the criteria for rating them are also frivolous: impact on the sport as well as personal appearance and style count for

much more than the won-loss record of the person they attend to. As with the manager category, weights and hometowns are eliminated in favor of naming the individual or individuals the valet serves. Honorable mentions, by the way, go to Rip Rogers' Brenda Britton and Johnny Tatum's new valet Missy. We won't even discuss Kevin Sullivan's women!



Baby Doll

VALETS

- 1—BABY DOLL
Tully Blanchard
- 2—SUNSHINE
Scott Casey, Kabuki
- 3—PRECIOUS
Jim Garvin
- 4—MISS ELIZABETH
Randy Savage
- 5—MISS LINDA
Exotic Adrian Street

Six-man tag teams: Here we've included a list of the top five six-man tag teams in the country along with their combined weights. Like our conventional tag team ratings, these rankings are based on won-loss records for the past month, quality of opposition, and the inherent skill of each team.

SIX-MAN TAG TEAMS

- 1—KERRY & KEVIN VON ERICH & BRIAN ADIDAS
Combined weight: 737 pounds
- 2—IVAN & NIKITA KOLOFF & KRUSHER KHRUSHCHEV
Combined weight: 827 pounds
- 3—THE FABULOUS FREEBIRDS
Combined weight: 791 pounds
- 4—KILLER BROOKS, MARK LEWIN, & ONE MAN GANG
Combined weight: 953 pounds
- 5—SAMOANS AFA, SIKKA, & SAMULA
Combined weight: 833 pounds

The address for mail: We welcome your comments, criticisms and questions about our ratings system, and we're particularly interested in your comments in this issue's ratings analysis. All letters are read carefully, and from time to time we will address your comments on an installment of this column. Send your letters to: "Ratings Analysis" c/o *The Wrestler*; Box 48; Rockville Centre; New York 11571.

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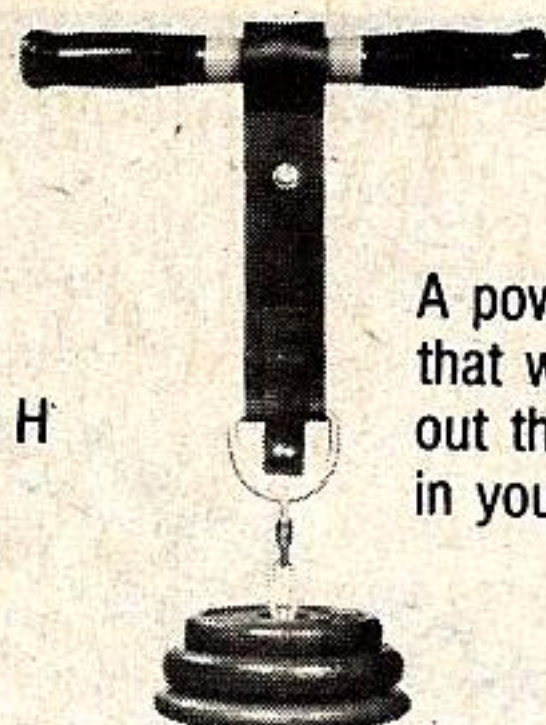
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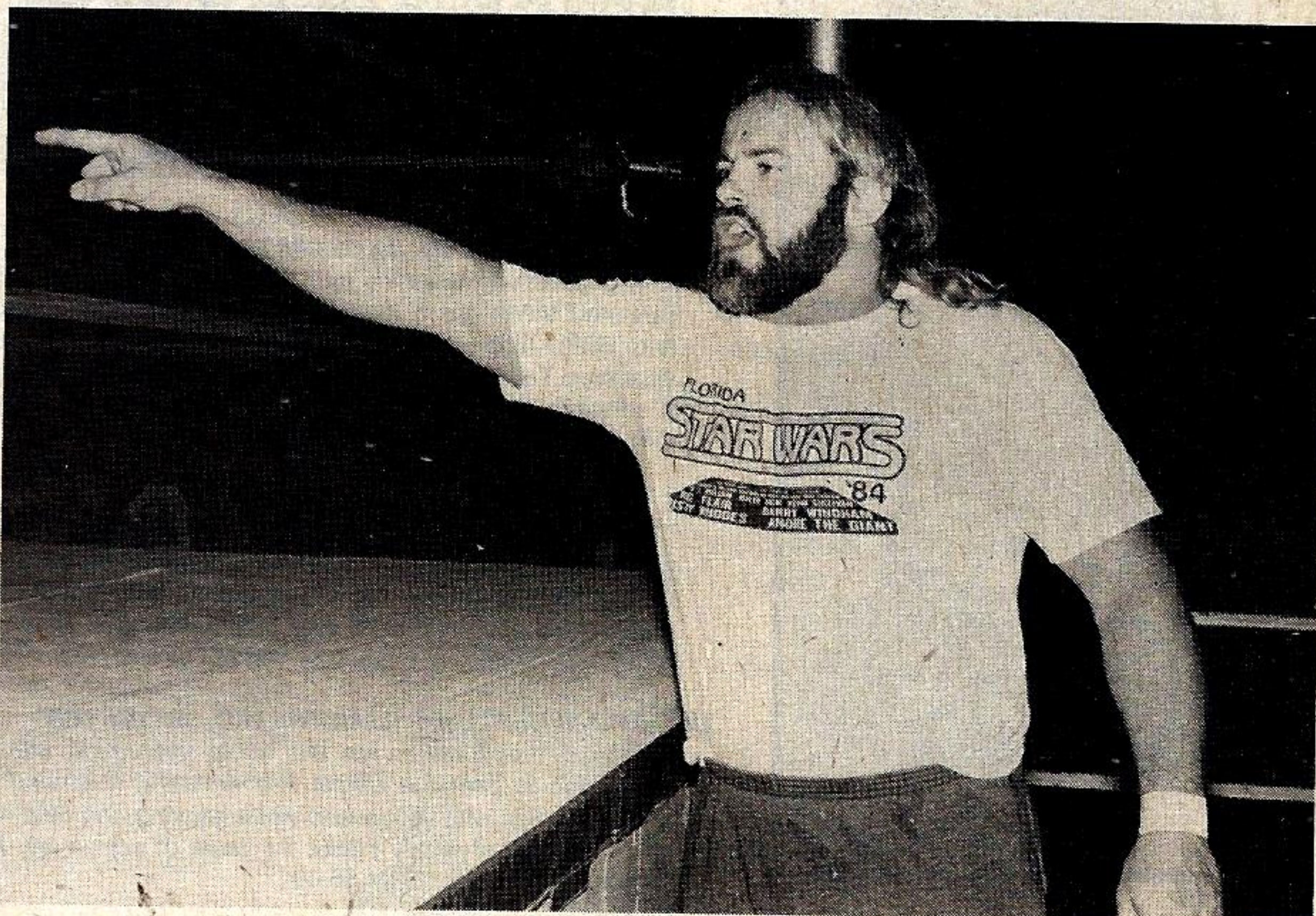
WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 8)

The S & S Express. "We feel great!" Savoldi recently told me. "We're working very very hard on our teamwork, speed, and timing, and we're making no secret about the fact that we're after the Pacific Northwest tag team belts that **Mike Miller** and **Karl Steiner** have. You know, a lot of fans look to the

reason for The Hulkster's recent lack of title action ... **The Fantastics—Tommy Rogers** and **Bobby Fulton**—are headed back to the World Class area; they had recently been wrestling in the Mid-South.

Kevin Sullivan has returned to Florida, and now controls the ac-



Kevin Sullivan calls the shots from outside the ring. He now controls the career—and the mind—of Bob Roop. Roop's interference in a recent Sullivan-Kendell Windham match caused the Florida title to be held up.

Northwest as a proving ground for singles wrestlers. **Billy Jack Haynes** and **Roddy Piper** and **Buzz Sawyer** and so many others came out of this area. Now me and Steve hope that soon people will be talking about the S & S Express as a team right up there with **The Fabulous Ones** and **The Rock 'n' Roll Express**, and that the Northwest will be a proving ground not only for singles wrestlers, but for tag teams as well!"

Buzz Sawyer is now wrestling in the Mid-South, and says that he is after both North American champion **Dick Murdoch** and Mid-South television champion **Butch Reed** ... Rumors continue to fly about **Hulk Hogan** needing knee surgery. One report says that if Hogan doesn't have his knee operated on within a year, it could cripple him for life. Perhaps this is the

tions of **Bob Roop**, who has shaved one side of his head and face completely bald (the other side sports half a mustache and half a Road Warrior-type hairdo!). It was Roop's interference on behalf of Sullivan in Kevin's recent match with Florida champion **Kendell Windham** that caused that title to be held up. Roop and Sullivan combined their efforts to piledrive Windham into the mat with double force! We hear that Kendell's father **Blackjack Mulligan** is in town—and he isn't pleased by what he sees happening to his son!

Did you catch the recent **Andre the Giant-King Kong Bundy** brawl on cable from Madison Square Garden? Andre had Bundy kayoed and about to be pinned when **Big John Studd** interfered ... If you ask me, **Randy Savage's** manager,

Miss Elizabeth, seems out of place in a wrestling arena. I think the first time she gets a cupload of beer dumped on her from some unruly fan will be the last time she accompanies "The Macho Man" to the ring . . . **Barry Windham** is fully recovered from the eye injury he sustained during the WWF tag team title loss to **Brutus Beefcake** and **Greg Valentine**. Windham says that he and **Mike Rotundo** are primed and ready to take the WWF tag belts for a third time.

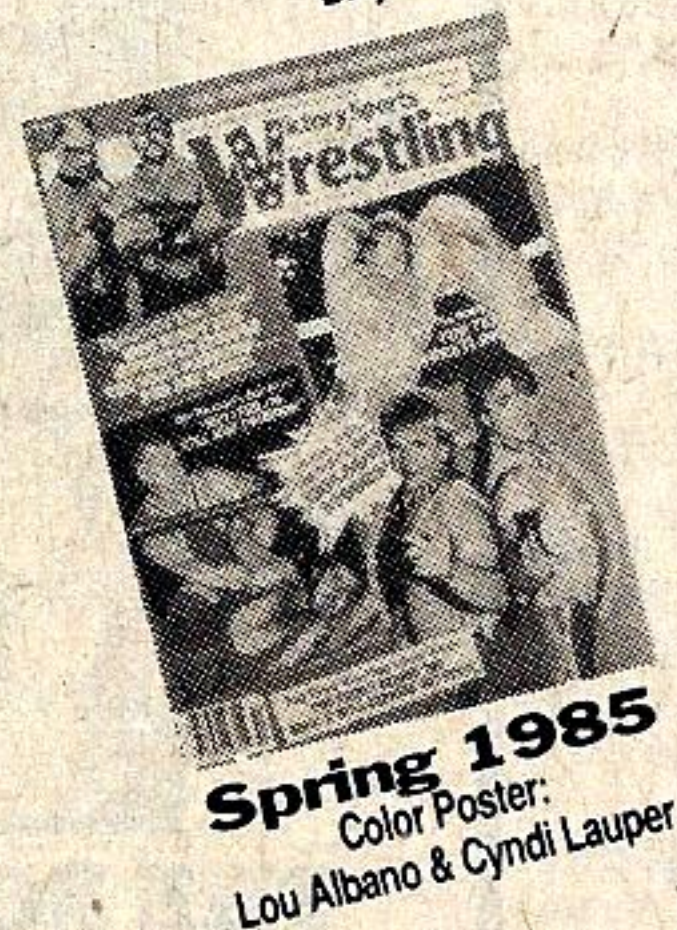
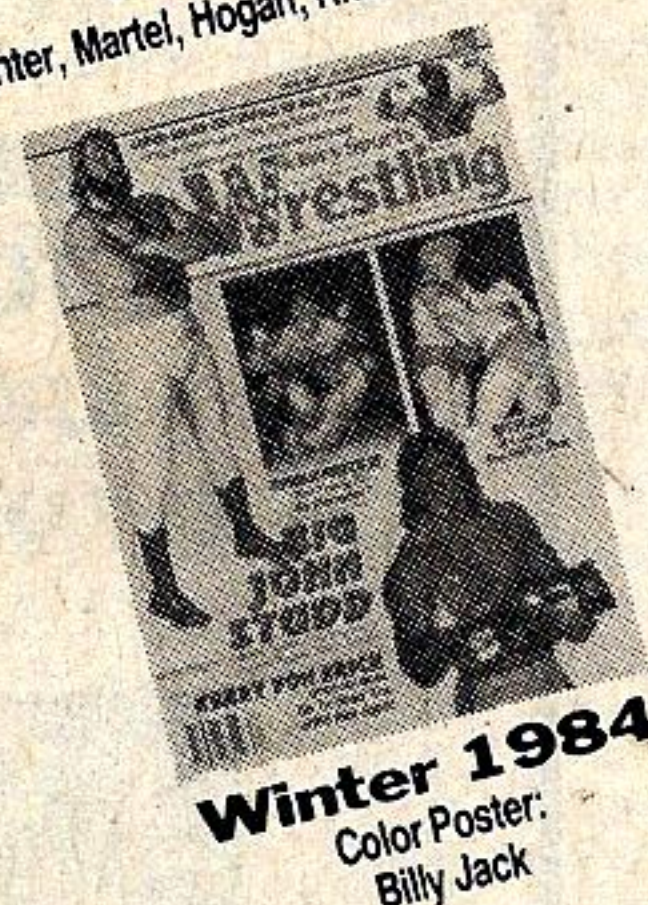
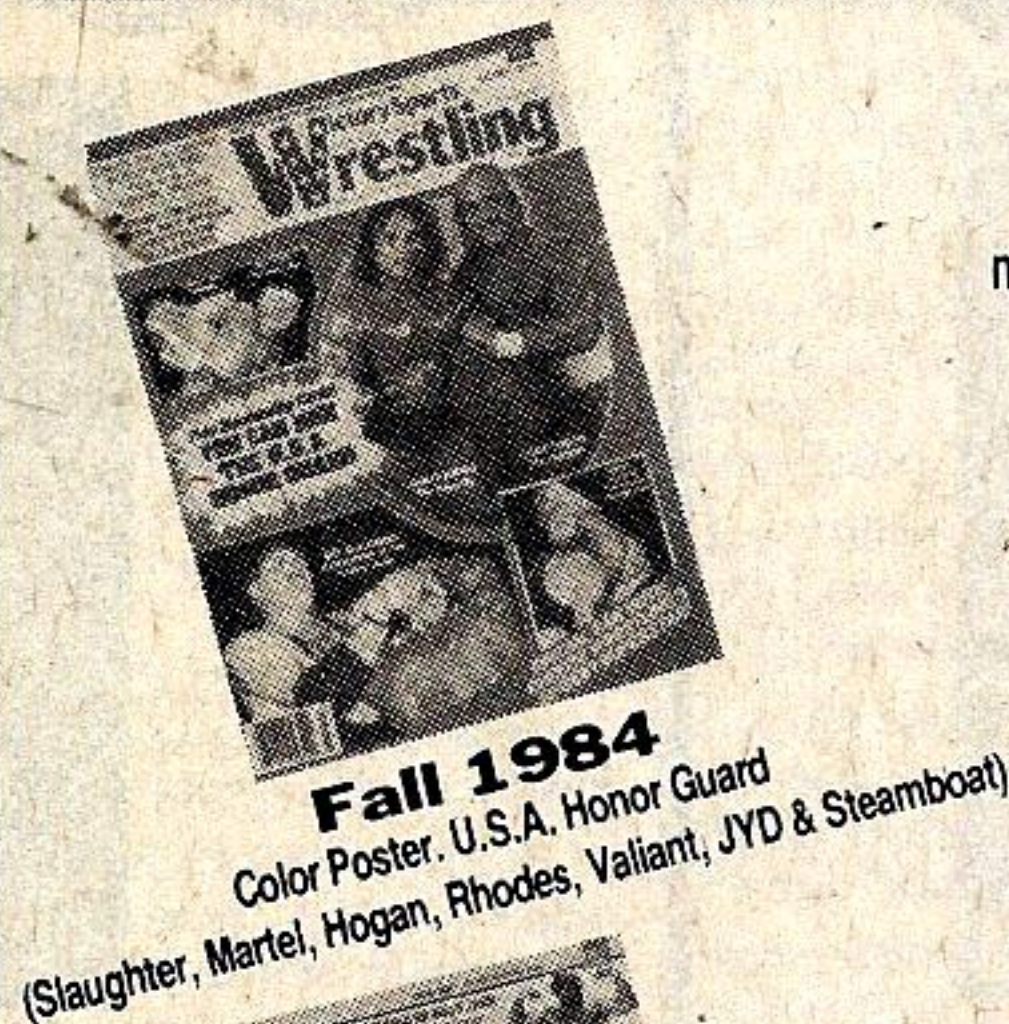
Dick Slater is now wrestling in the Mid-South area. "Mr. Unpredictable" says that he's on a mission there, but won't reveal what that mission is. All he will say is that he's not after any championship belts . . . **Bob Armstrong** will undergo surgery to treat an injured leg and will not be wrestling in the Continental Southeast area for some time to come.

Speaking of the Southeast, we're happy to welcome that area of the country to our "Official Wrestling Ratings" beginning with this issue. Normally you'd read about this kind of a change in "Ratings Analysis," but the change was made very close to press time, so I'm bringing you the news right here. This is just another step in our effort to improve *The Wrestler's* coverage of Continental Championship Wrestling.

And please don't forget to tune in to WTBS to see yours truly each Sunday evening at 7:05 p.m. (Eastern time) as I host "Scouting Report" on *The Best Of World Championship Wrestling*. Each week I'll be talking with NWA World champion **Ric Flair** about the top contenders to his title, and from time to time we will make a blow-by-blow examination of one of Flair's most important title defenses. Hope you like it, and I hope you'll write to me in care of *The Wrestler* to let me know what you think about "Scouting Report"—good or bad.

And that's what's happening. See you at the matches! ☐

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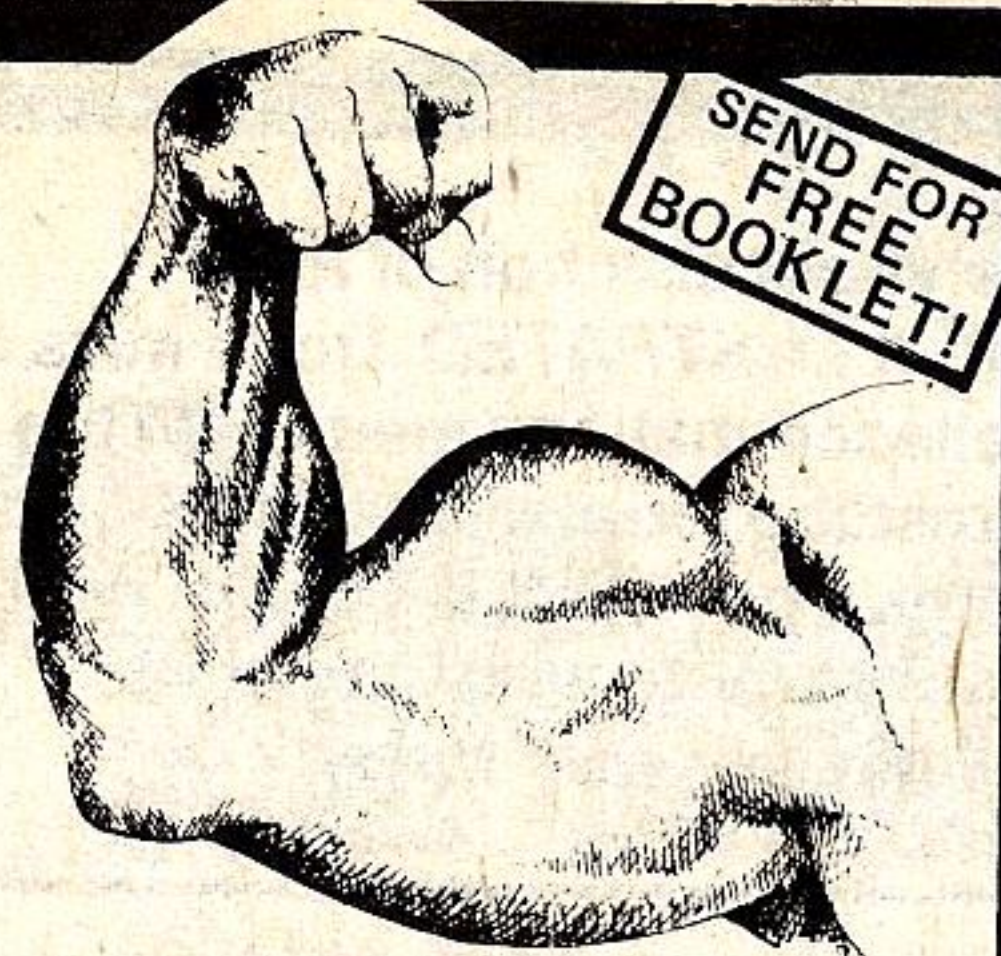
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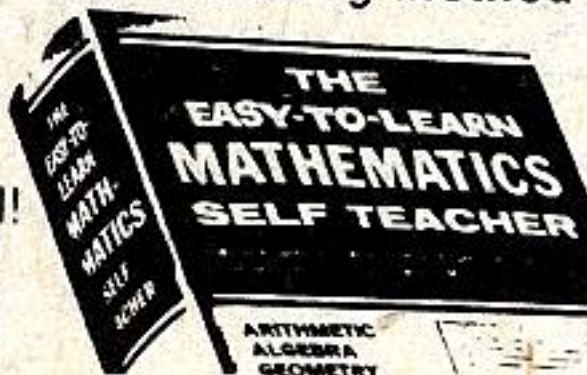
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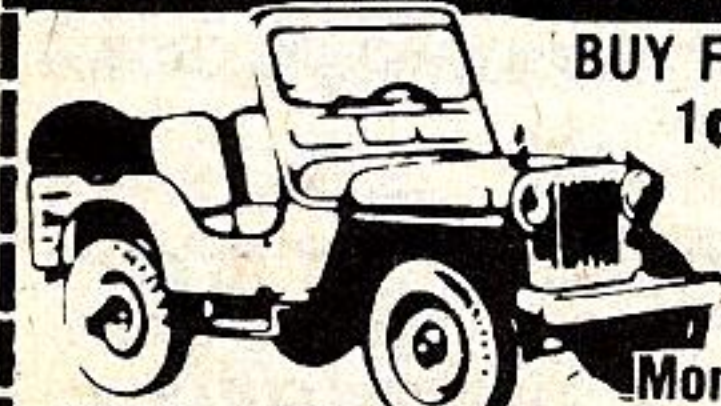
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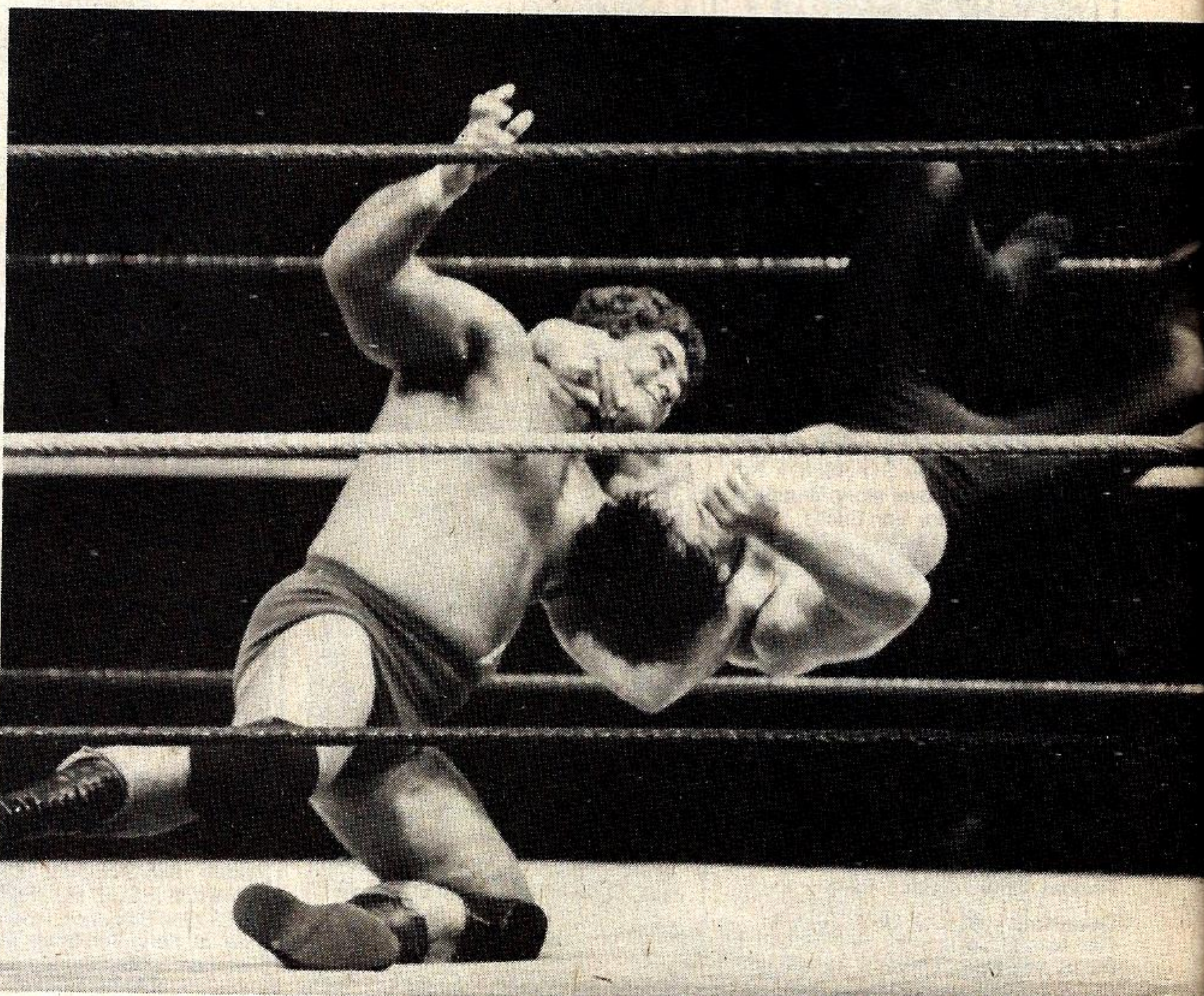
(Continued from page 10)

and Bruiser Brody were both disqualified... Scott Casey beat Killer Tim Brooks... Mark Lewin beat Kabuki... Misty Blue Simms defeated Kathy Lerux.

ROSEMONT, IL (Correspondent—Michael Winkle): The Rick Steamboat-Magnificent Muraco feud, making its violent national

Muraco and gave the match to the blinded Steamboat.

In other bouts: The British Bulldogs defeated Brett Hart and Jim Neidhardt... Hulk Hogan defeated Nikolai Volkoff... King Kong Bundy squashed Swede Hanson... Wendi Richter defeated The Spider Lady... The Iron Sheik defeated George Steele on a



Magnificent Muraco takes Rick Steamboat to the mat, nearly breaking his neck in the process. Muraco has an unfair advantage in this war of Hawaiians: Mr. Fuji.

tour, was the highlight of this card at the Horizon. Steamboat wasted very little time in attacking Muraco, putting the Magnificent One on the defensive with a deft demonstration of armbars, dropkicks, and bodyslams. The Hawaiian heartthrob continued his assault on Muraco and it looked as if this match might end early.

The wily Mr. Fuji, Muraco's manager, changed the course of the match, though, when he jumped on to the ring apron and threw some type of white powder into the eyes of Steamboat. The referee immediately disqualified

countout... Tito Santana defeated The Missing Link... Moondog Spot defeated Steve Lombardi... Adrian Adonis beat Tony Garea.

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK (Correspondent—Kevin Beck): The main event featured an eight-man tag team explosion pitting "Hack-saw" Jim Duggan, Kerry Von Erich, Al Perez, and The Midnight Rider against "Dr. Death" Steve Williams, Bruiser Bob Sweetan, El Corsario, and Kareem Muhammad. No disqualification. No time limit. The only thing guaranteed

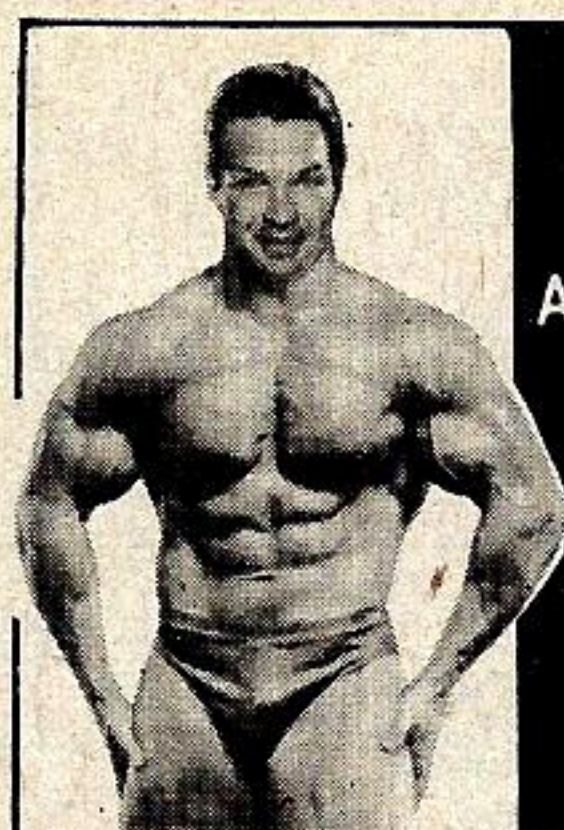
was a match bursting to the seams with tension and excitement.

The Midnight Rider did not show up at the beginning of the match, so his team was forced to start with only three wrestlers. Duggan and Williams squared off against one another to begin the action and the two bearded and brawny grapplers battered each other about the ring. Williams tagged off to Muhammad, who gained a momentary advantage over Duggan until Hacksaw dumped him unceremoniously from the ring.

Duggan gave way to Perez, who found himself face to face against Bob Sweetan. Perez armdragged Bruiser Bob several times before allowing Von Erich into the ring, and it was at this juncture that the match degenerated into an all-out brawl. Perez and Corsario battled in one corner as Von Erich and Sweetan exchanged loping roundhouses in the other. Duggan fought off Muhammad and Williams in center ring.

Suddenly, Chris Adams rushed in from the dressing room, pulled Von Erich from the ring, and delivered a superkick to Kerry's face. Skandor Akbar, Muhammad, and Sweetan tried to finish Duggan off, but to the rescue rushed the mysterious Midnight Rider, packing a metal pipe, which he used to clear the ring of Akbar and Co. before vanishing himself, leaving Duggan's team the winners by countout.

In other bouts: Butch Reed defeated Jake "The Snake" Roberts ... Dick Murdoch and Humongous fought to a brutal double-disqualification ... Chris Adams defeated Brian Adidas ... The Fantastics defeated Dutch Mantel and Bill Dundee ... Mark Lewin defeated Eddie Gilbert ... Wendell Cooley defeated The Nightmare ... The Barbarian manhandled Jerry Grey. ☐



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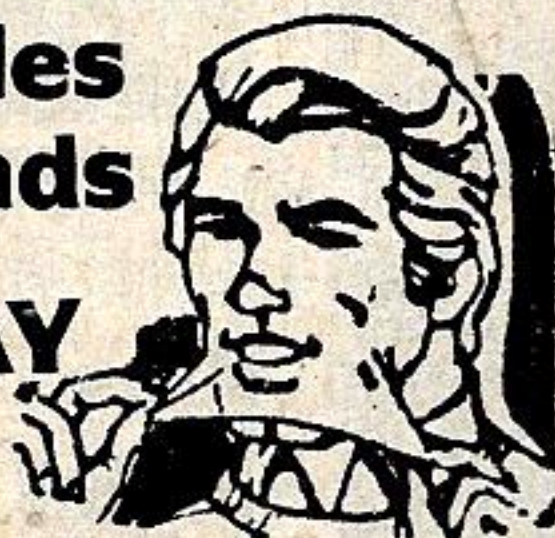
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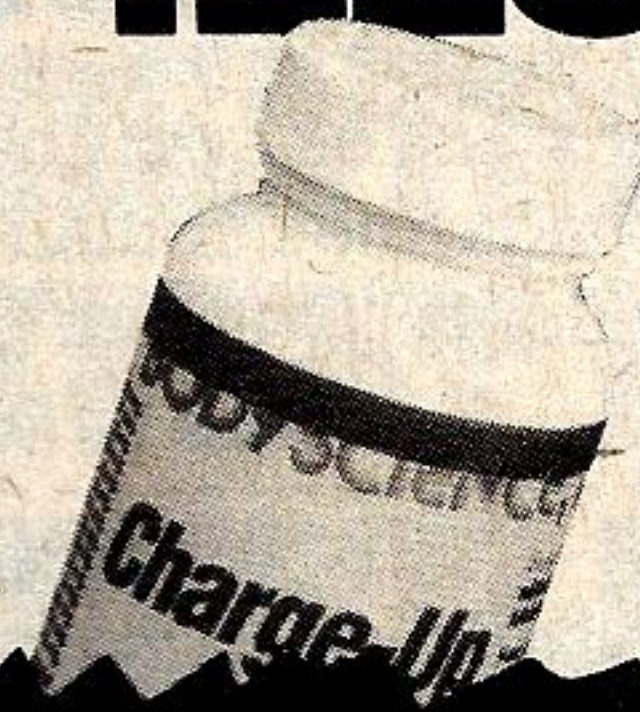
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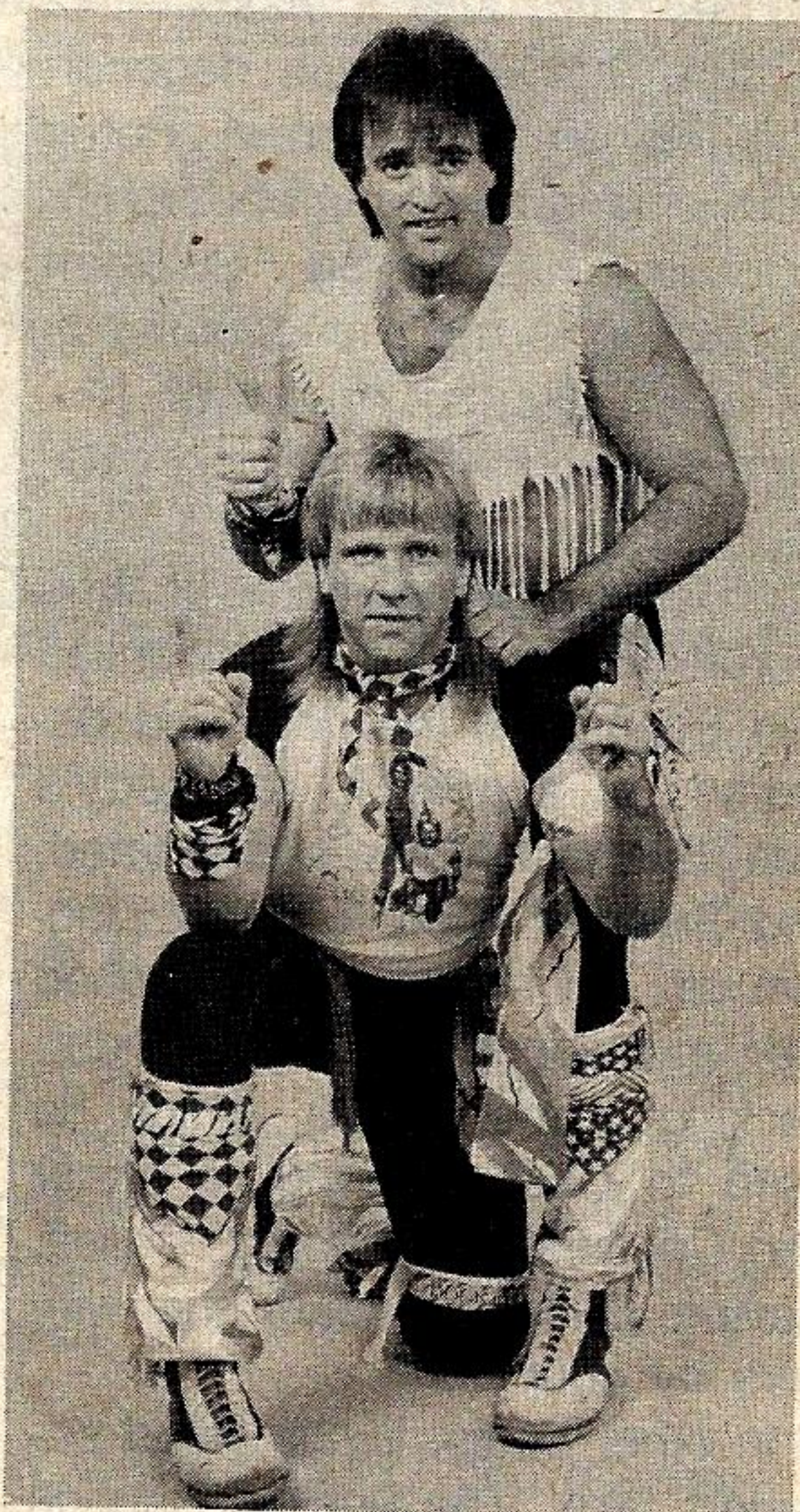
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YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 12)

lacked that workingman's ethic," Misty said. "Certainly, Rick Martel is precisely the best example of the kind of a wrestler, the kind of a champion, who gets out there, works hard, doesn't worry about the spotlight or the national media attention. He does his job and lets the fans judge him as they may. I find that to be an admirable and refreshing trait in a man, and I admire Rick Martel very much for it."

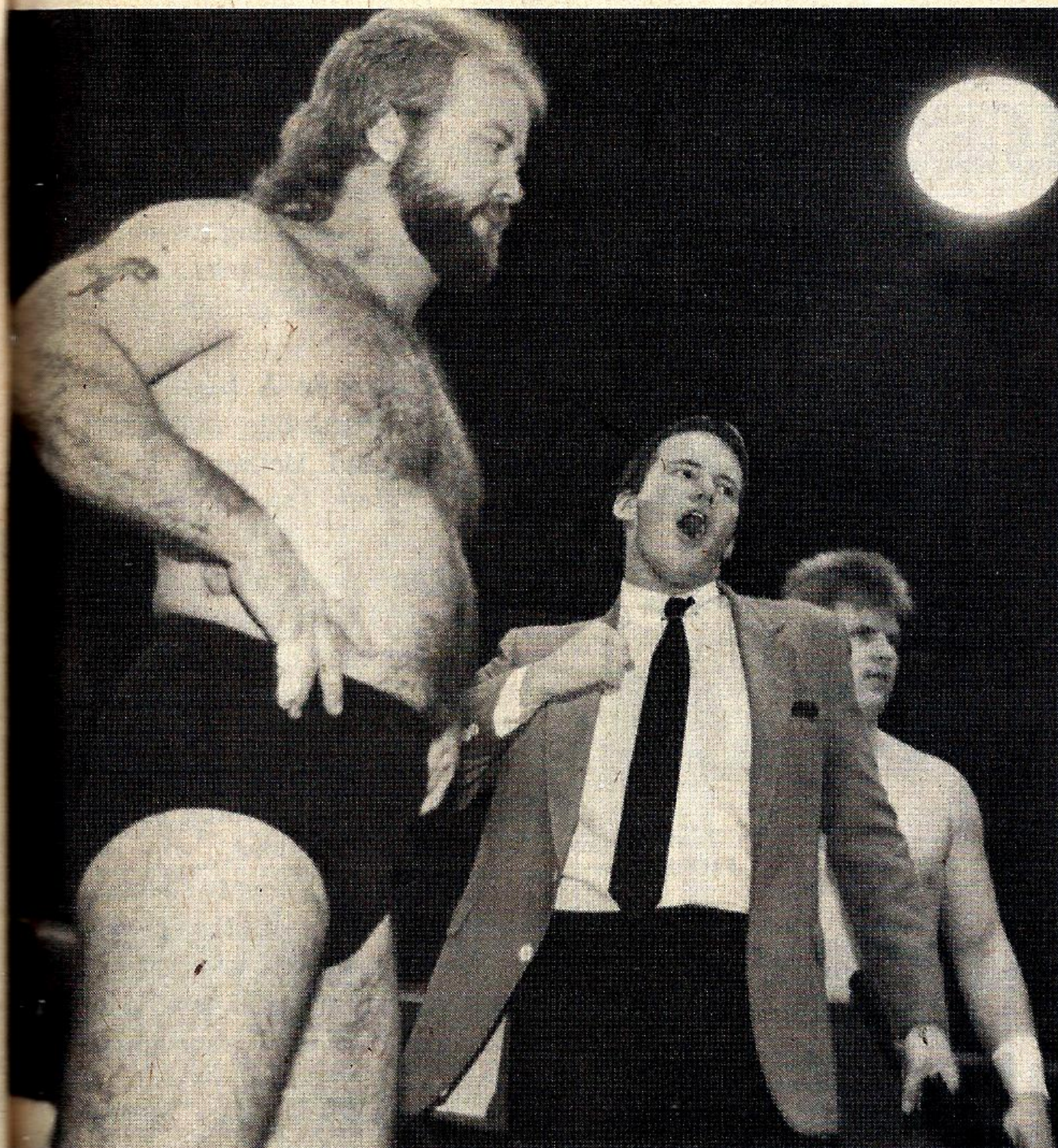
Q: "My question is for Rick Morton and Robert Gibson, The Rock 'n' Roll Express: If you were to lose the NWA World tag team title,



If Robert Gibson (standing) and Rick Morton were to lose the NWA World tag team title, they would not split up, according to Morton.

would you consider wrestling in singles matches for other titles?"—Betty Jo Clark, Hartsville, SC

A: Rick Morton replies: "I don't think we'd split up, Betty Jo. See, our success as a team is based on team-



Jim Cornette, whose mouth seems to be open at all times, does the majority of the talking for his Midnight Express. Cornette prefers that Dennis Condrey and Bobby Eaton keep their minds on their wrestling.

work, speed, agility, and cooperation. We aren't two singles wrestlers who came together to form a team, we're a tag team that is better than the sum of the parts, you know what I'm saying? We were both singles wrestlers once, but we've gone beyond that now. If we lost the titles, we wouldn't split up, we'd just brace ourselves and challenge the men who beat us in a rematch."

Q: My question is for Jim Cornette: "Why do you answer Dennis Condrey and Bobby Eaton's questions, like you did in the 'You Asked Us' in the November issue of *The Wrestler*? They can answer for themselves! Someone should take that tennis racket of yours, which has steel in it, by the way, and everyone knows it, and wrap it

around your neck!"—Lynn Biddy, Ball Ground, GA

A: Jim Cornette provided this answer: "I answer for my team Lynn, because I am their manager, I am the smartest man in the world of wrestling, my responsibility to Loverboy Dennis and Beautiful Bobby is not only to manager their in-the-ring careers, but to make certain that their public profile is properly maintained. Of course they can answer for themselves, but I would rather have them working out in the gym rather than answering your stupid questions. As for my tennis racket, would you like to try it out? Would you like to play tennis with me someday? Of course not. A sweatog like you from a place called 'Ball Ground' probably has only one sport: being bat girl for the local donkey softball league!" □

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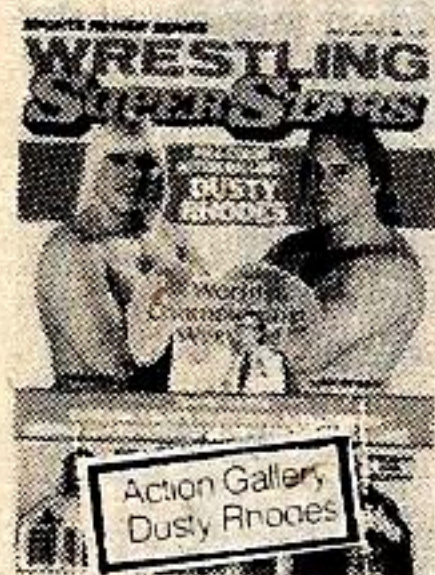
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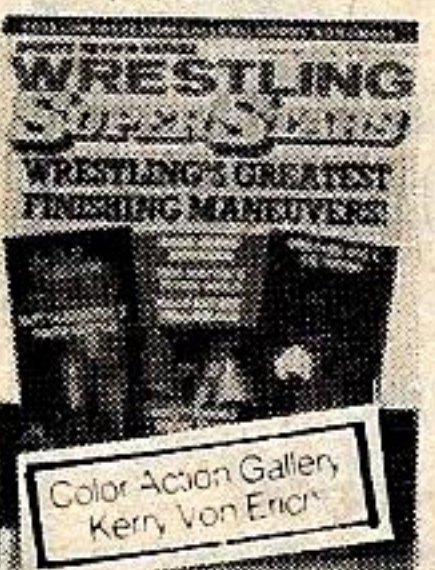
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RIC FLAIR

(Continued from page 28)

Wrestler. "There were times this summer when I thought I might have to buy a new filing cabinet in order to handle McDaniel's correspondence. It was getting pretty complicated."

Geigel's solution: A best-of-three falls NWA World title match between Flair and McDaniel, to be held on Labor Day in Tampa, Florida.

"I'd seen so many match proposals from McDaniel that I almost sent this one back unopened," Flair said, "but I received a telegram from Geigel informing me of the match and of the stipulation that it would be two out of three falls."

"Besides," Flair added, "why not take care of my bounty hunting myself? After all these other people failed, I might as well take care of business on my own. I'll get rid of McDaniel, and save 20 grand in the process!"

Flair signed the contract, but insisted that there be one stipulation added: If McDaniel lost, he would not be given any more title shots without Flair's approval.

The Flair-McDaniel NWA World title match was the main event of a card known as "The Battle of the Belts." Other main events that day included an AWA World title defense by Rick Martel, an AWA World tag team title defense by The Road Warriors, a Southern title defense by Rick Rude, and a Florida title defense by Jack Hart.

"There were a lot of big matches scheduled for that day, but the pressure and the spotlight were definitely on Flair and McDaniel," observed veteran wrestling commentator Gordon Solie. "The situation between them here in Florida stretches back six months, and goes even further back than that in the Carolinas."

"Because of the pressure," Solie continued, "and because of the at-

(Continued on page 60)

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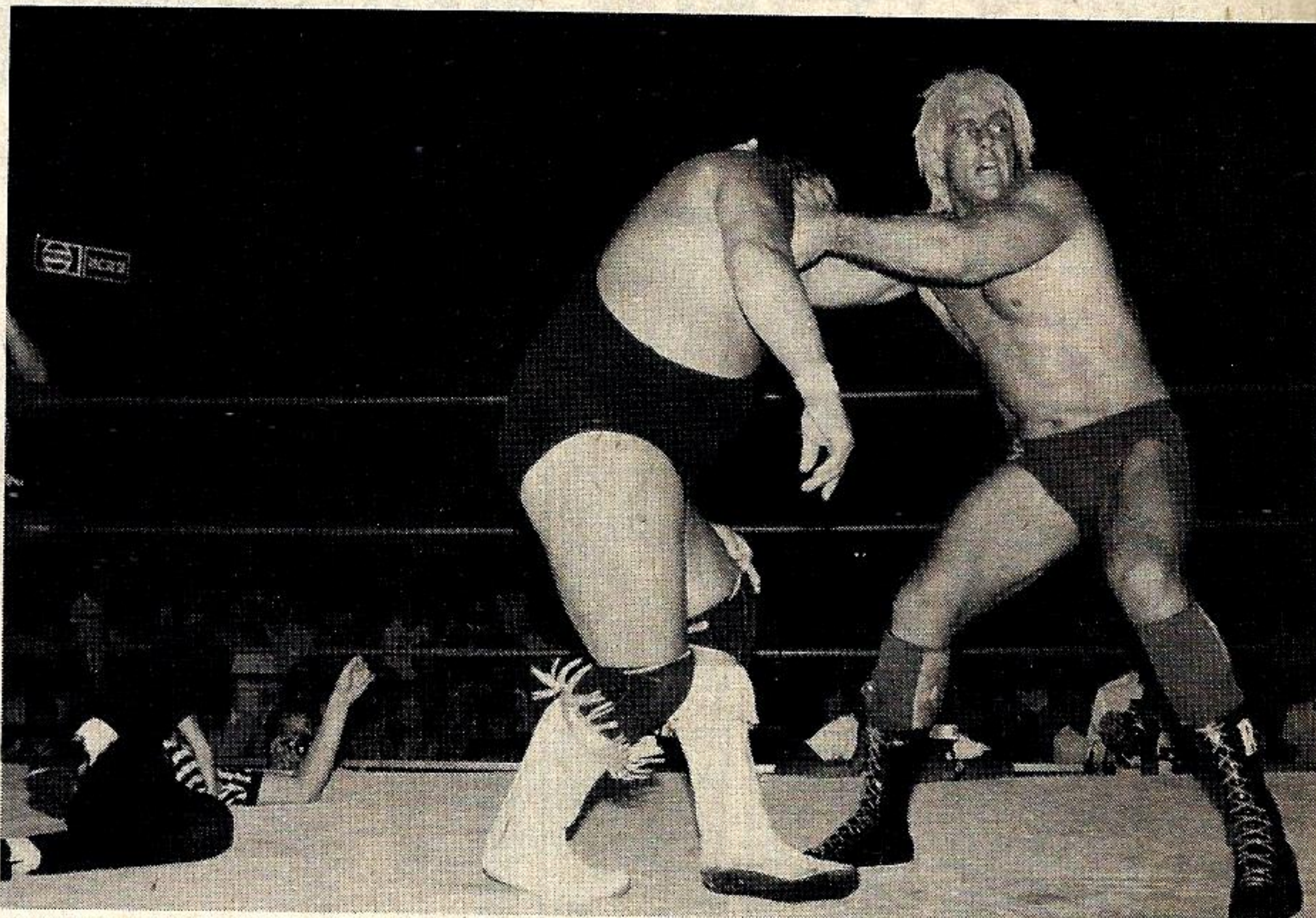
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RIC FLAIR

(Continued from page 58)



tention given 'The Battle of the Belts' card, the depth of the feud, and the stipulations of the match, it was a do-or-die affair for both Flair and Wahoo. And when that bell rang, those two men went at it as fast, furious, and hard as any two men I've ever seen in my entire life."

McDaniel seized an early lead, capturing the first fall with a sleeperhold followed by a pin.

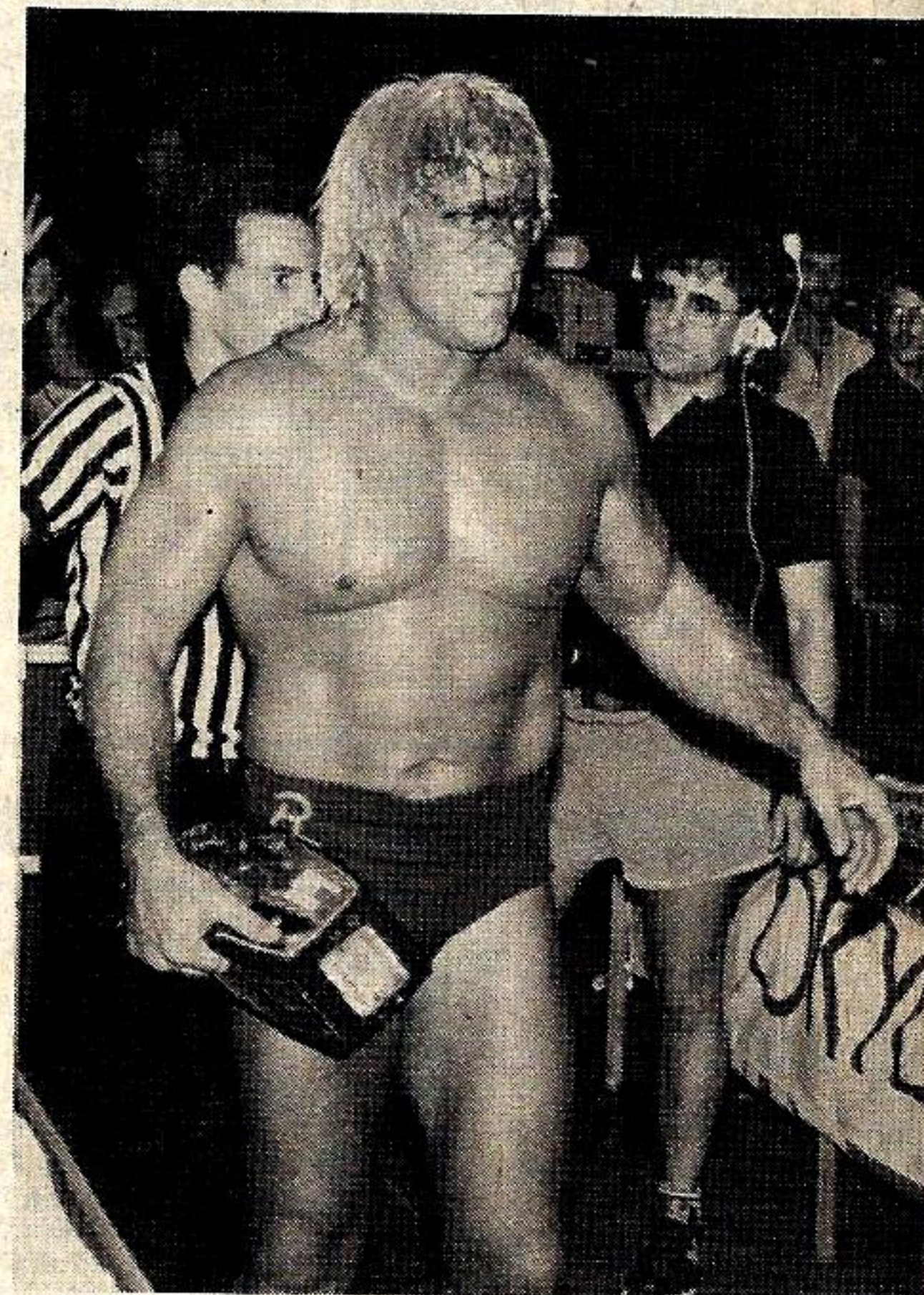
Flair evened it up in the second fall, winning it following a perfectly executed kneedrop to McDaniel's head.

In the third fall, McDaniel had the sleeperhold on Flair, but Flair kicked off the turnbuckle and sent McDaniel falling to the mat on his back. Flair scrambled in and scored the pin.

And as quickly and matter-of-factly as that, it was over. All the months of hatred and bitterness, all the months of bounty hunting and name calling and threats. All of it. Over and done with in three all-too-quick falls.

"But it's *not* over," McDaniel asserted in a postmatch press conference, "not by a longshot. Forget about Nikita Koloff or Magnum T.A. or Kerry Von Erich or anyone else. Flair knows that *I'm* the most dan-

When Bill Alfonso got too close to the action and was knocked to the mat, Flair grabbed Wahoo by the throat and flipped him over the top rope (above). Ric saved his championship belt and \$20,000 in one night (below).



gerous threat to his title today, and he's not going to escape me that quickly.

"He may have a say over whether I can get future title defenses," McDaniel said, "but the fans won't let him cut me out entirely. When I get him again, I'm going to turn up the heat. And you can bet that it's going to be Flair and his precious title that get burned." □

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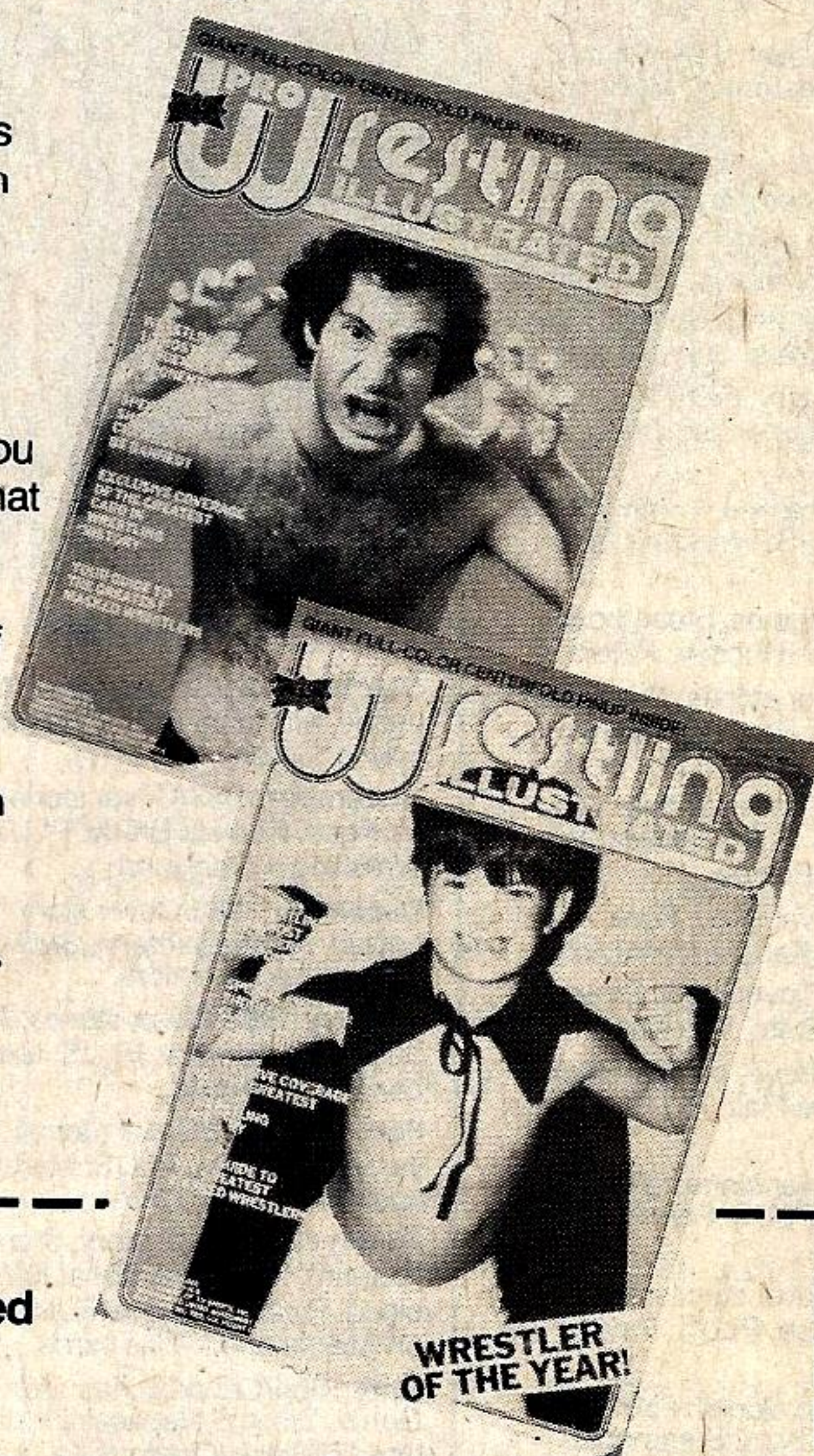
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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 6)

against these other popular grapplers. Hulk-a-Mania must never be put in question. With the WWF's tremendous array of talent, it's criminal to limit the matchups, the way McMahon does. Sgt. Slaughter didn't get a title shot so he walked. That's a trend that might catch on unless Vince McMahon wises up and treats his wrestlers fairly.

GEORGE MARTIN
Altoona, PA

NO FRIEND OF MAGNUM'S

I'm writing because I think Magnum T.A. is a disgrace to wrestling. If he is so great, then how come Tully Blanchard beat Magnum for the U.S. title? Tully Blanchard is the greatest



Tully Blanchard's U.S. title victory over Magnum T.A. proves he is the superior wrestler, writes Marc Points.

wrestler in the world, period. Then Magnum says that he can beat Ric Flair in 10 minutes. What Flair did to him I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. Then Magnum T.A. has the audacity and gall to attack Flair from behind. Thank God that Ole and Arn Anderson were there to rescue Flair. In my opinion, Magnum T.A. is the most overrated wrestler in the country.

MARC POINTS
Springfield, VA
(Continued on page 64)

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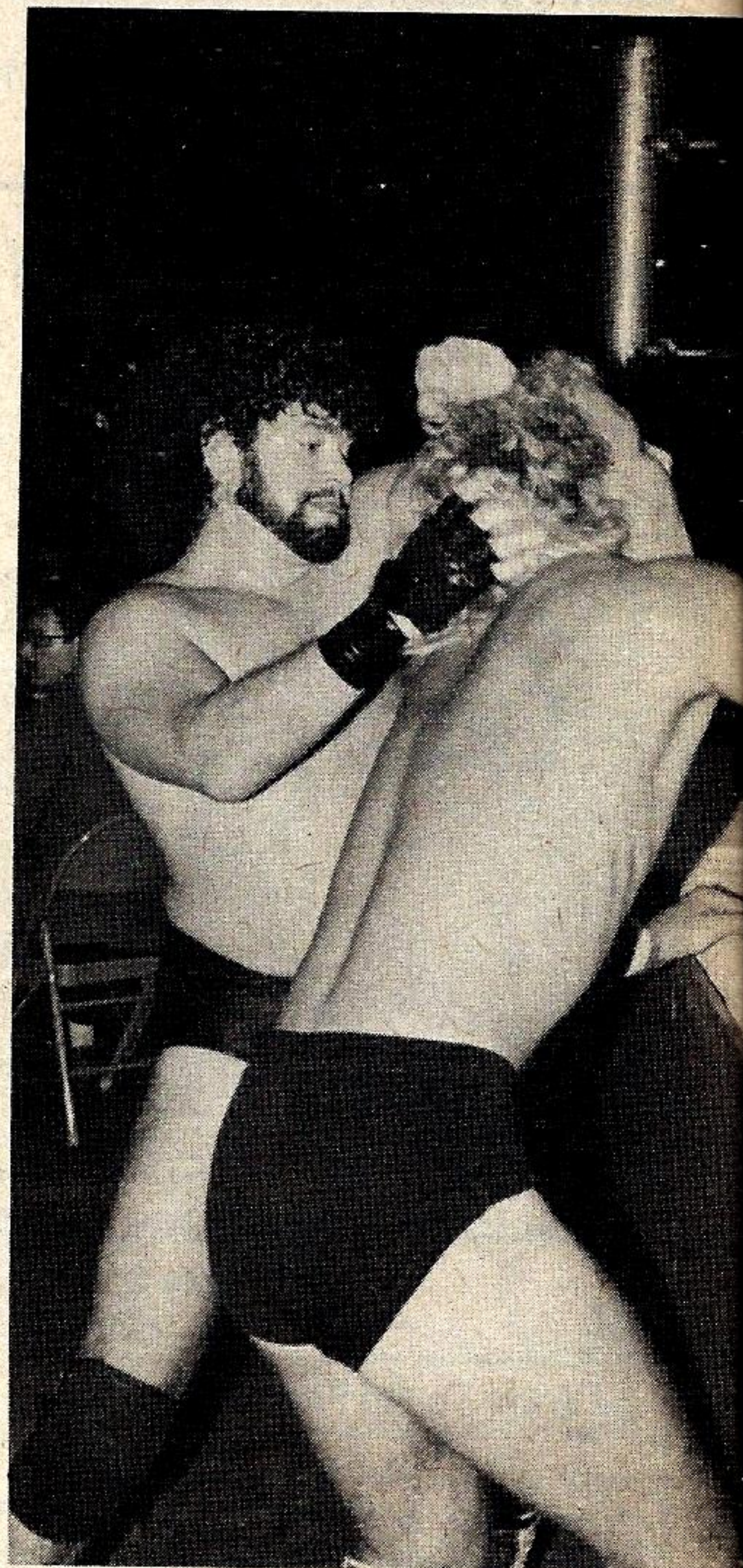
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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 62)

LEFT HIS HART IN TAMPA

How can you guys with a straight face and a tint of professionalism rate Jack Hart as the number two man in Florida? The guy is a canary, with the guts of a mosquito. His career record is something like 10-115, yet you can rate him in front of Wahoo



Jack Hart, ramming Kendell Windham's face into the ring apron, has not earned Jeremy Lamer's respect.

McDaniel and Billy Jack Haynes. And then you rate Bugsy McGraw number six. Unbelievable. There's a man more at home in front of a bowl of Count Chocula and watching *He-Man And The Masters Of The Universe* than in a wrestling ring, and you treat him like a professional athlete. Unbelievable. That's all I can say.

JEREMY LARNER
Deerfield, FL

Editor's Note: As Florida champion, Hart received an automatic number two ranking in the Florida ratings.]

BUTCHER IS GRADE A

How about a cover story, a color poster, or at least some recognition in the ratings for Abdullah the Butcher. Abdullah has been a mainstay in the ring for such a long time that I feel his skills are being overlooked. No one has maintained a savage consistency like the Butcher's. Everywhere he goes, no matter who he wrestles against, the man is feared like death itself. Granted, the man is not a pleasure to look at, but then wrestling is not a pretty sport. Results is a grappler's ultimate measurement, not the girth of his waist, and I think in both categories Abdullah the Butcher stands without peers. I know some women who even consider him sexy, my wife Wendy being one of them.

JOE EHRLICH
Queens, NY □

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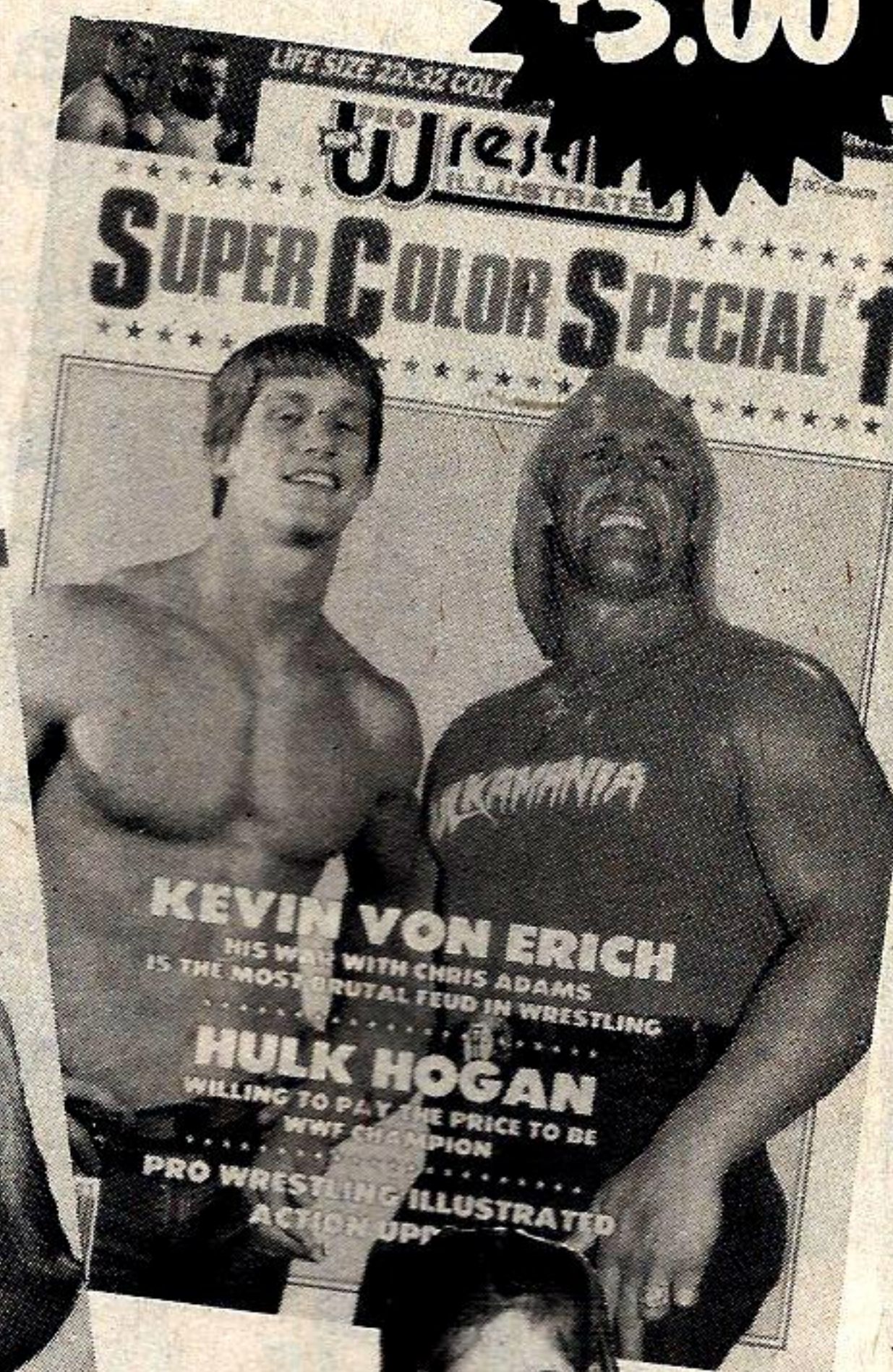
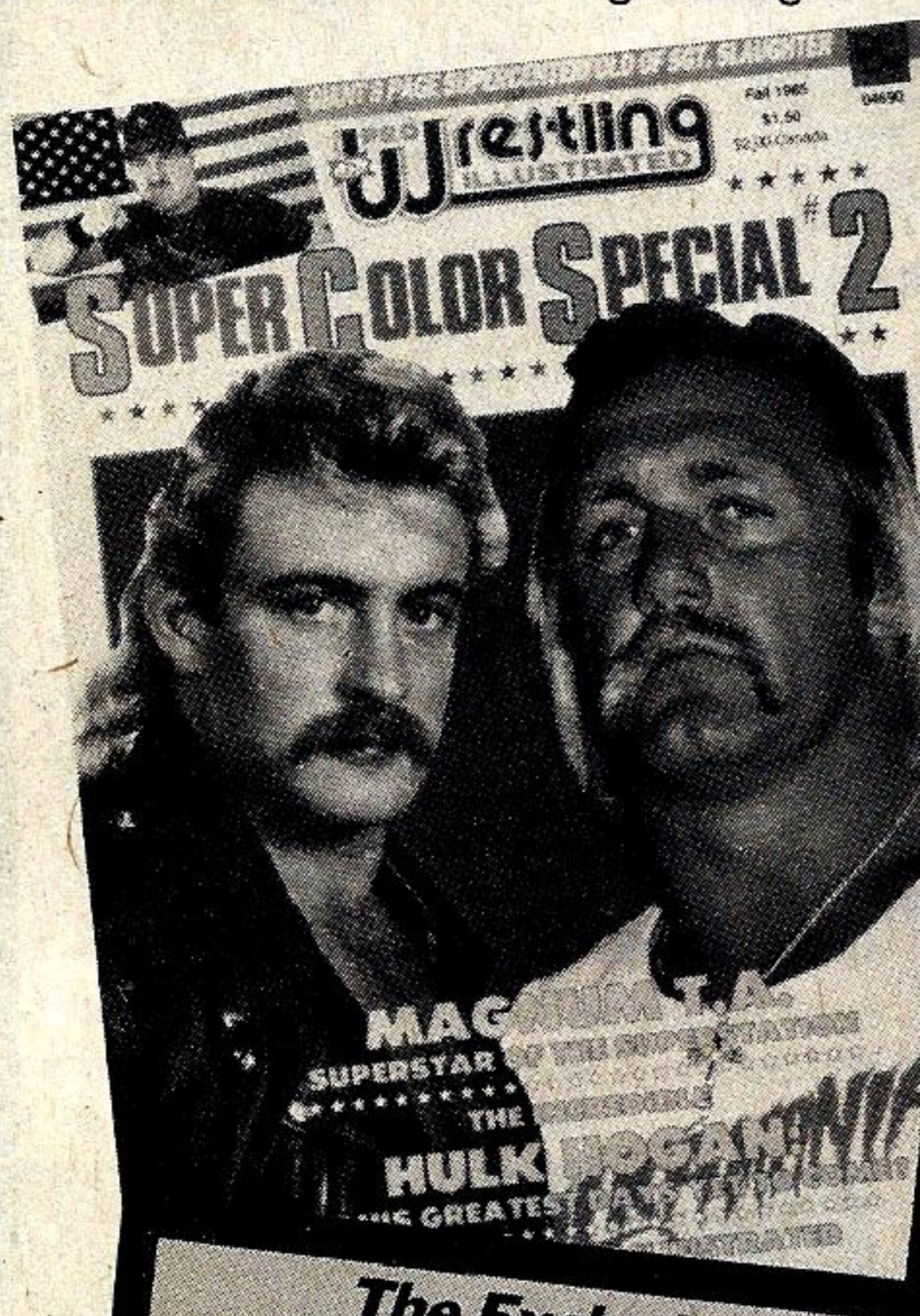
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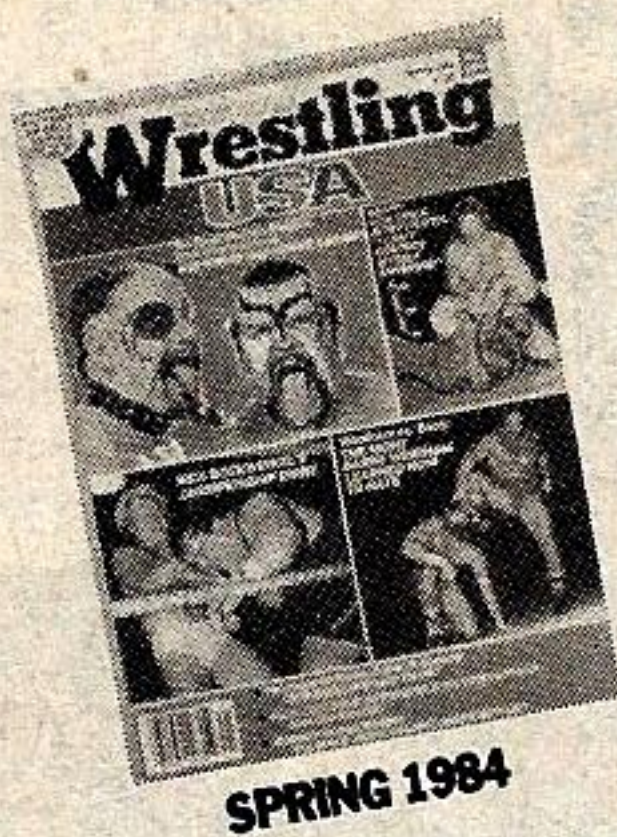
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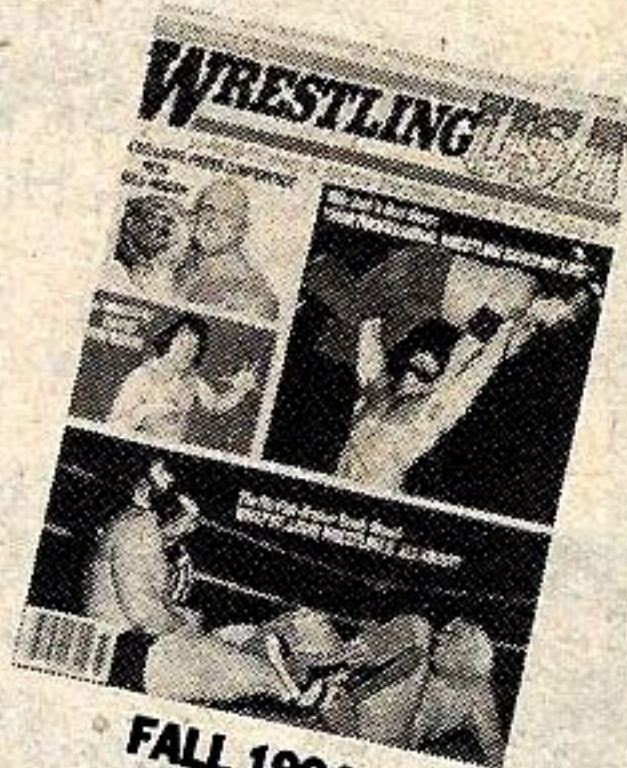
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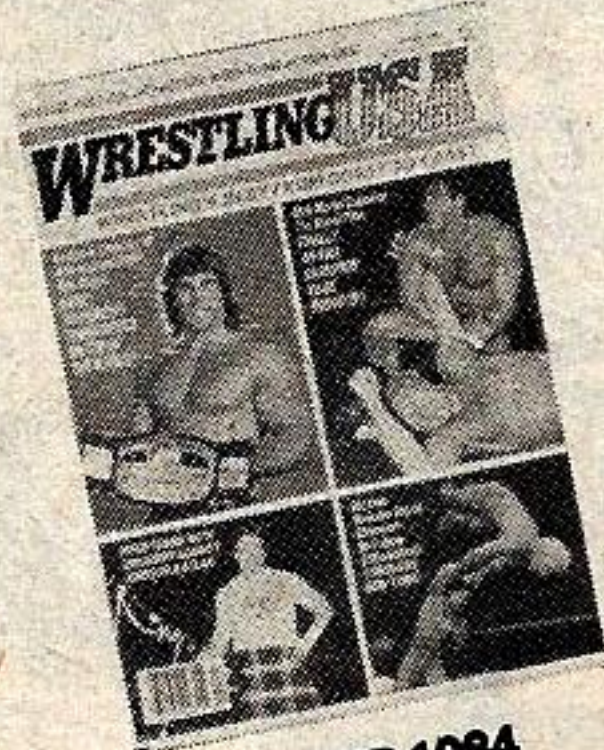
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CPL. KIRSCHNER

(Continued from page 31)

again, but I remember Slaughter being the type whose mere presence could energize 20,000 people.

My verdict and opinion is that Cpl. Kirschner would be best to divest himself of his ornamental patriotic garb immediately and concentrate on shoring up his wrestling skills. Slaughter's arousing oratory would have been useless if he couldn't back it up in the ring. Although Kirschner defeated Gama Singh, he found himself in trouble several times during the match. For a man who expects to restore to this area the concept of American domination, Kirschner had better get on the stick, in a hurry.

During his stay in the WWF, Slaughter was the most popular wrestler in the area, a man drunk with the spirit and possibilities of America, and who was able to stir the country to join his crusade. It's possible that this square-jawed Marine is one of a kind, a singular unit of passion never to be replaced or imitated.

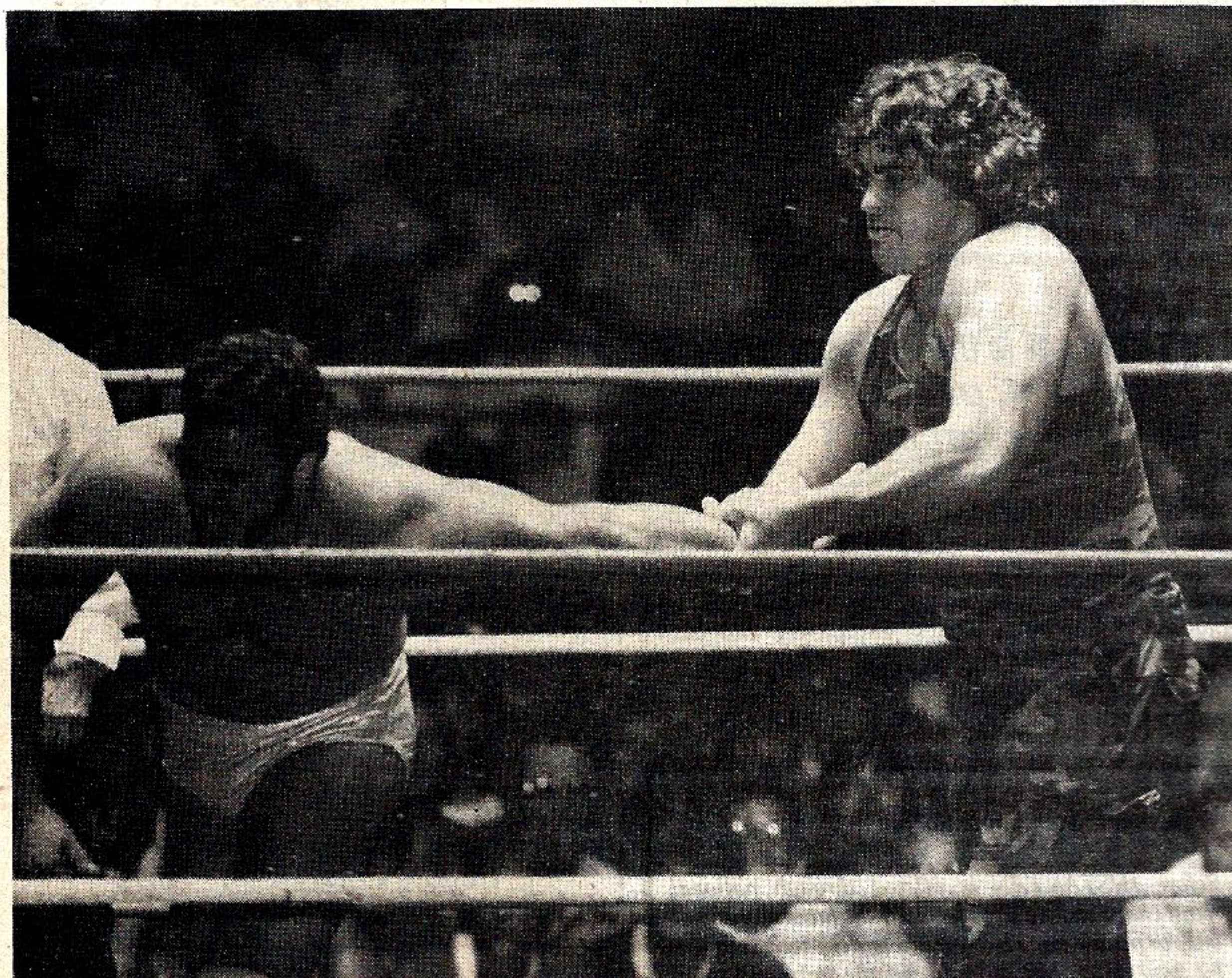
I remember about 20 years ago, when a high-flying star by the name of Antonino Rocca was the most popular wrestler in the sport. A promoter in the Midwest found Rocca out of his price range, so instead he trained a young Rocca lookalike named Luis Gonzalez. He taught him all of Rocca's moves, and, indeed, the kid did have some promise.

Anyway, Gonzalez was hugely successful—but against very limited competition. The promoter was so taken by Gonzalez's success that he signed him for a match against then-NWA champion Lou Thesz. The kid lasted 2½ minutes against Thesz before submitting to, are you ready, a *headlock*.

Rather than try to be Sgt. Slaughter, Cpl. Kirschner should

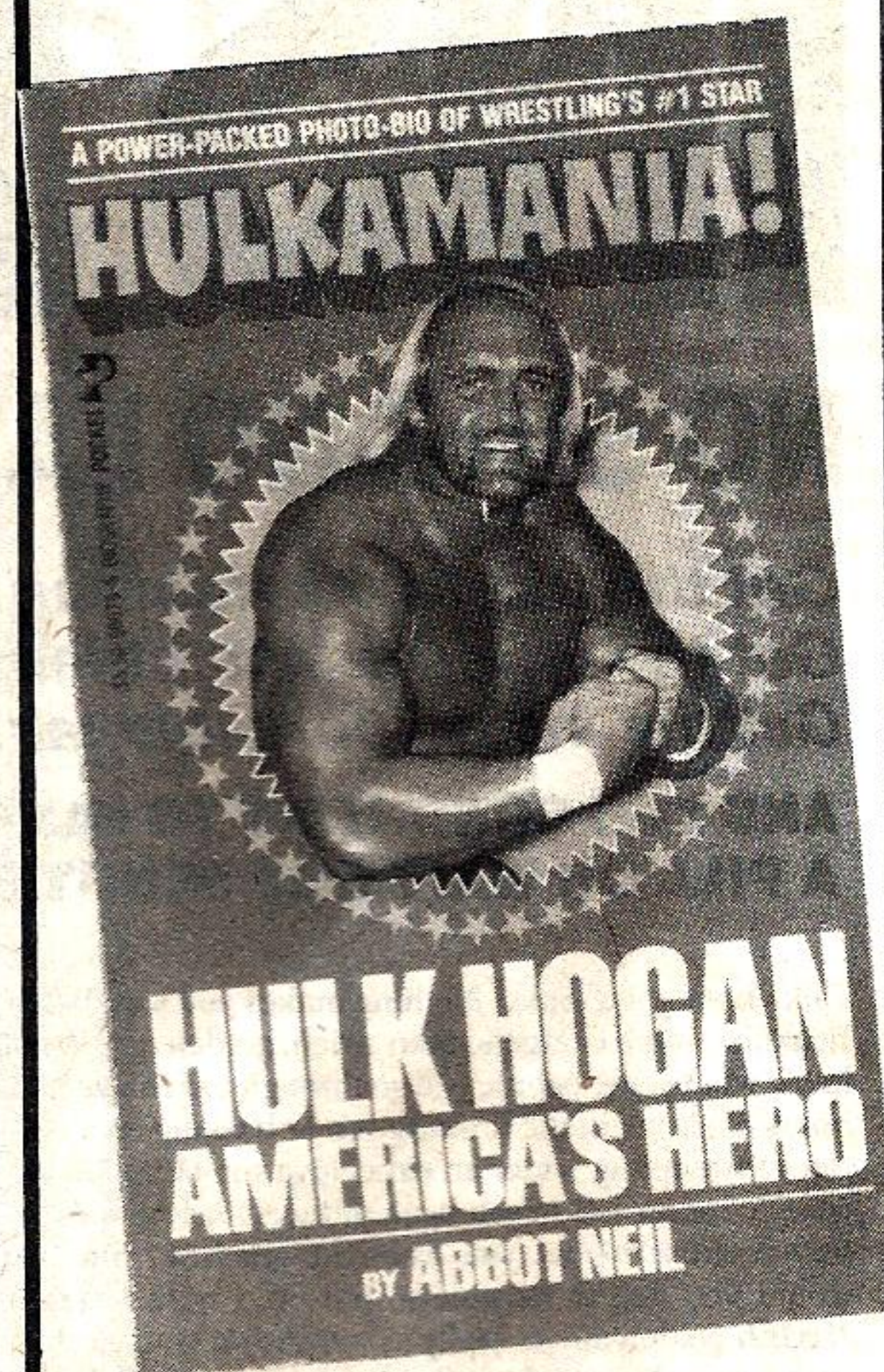


Kirschner won his match against Singh, but he had more difficulty than he should have had. Tangled in the ropes, Kirschner is wide open to Singh's attack (above). The Corporal measures his opponent's threshold for pain as he twists his wrist (below).



humble himself in Slaughter's image and attempt to carry on the dream of the Sarge. An original Picasso is a work of art, but a poorly drawn copy is just a piece of trash, no matter how expensive the frame may be. Kirschner should pay attention. ☐

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